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"YOU HEAR?" SHE SAID, "MY WORD AGAINST YOURS," AND THEY
BELIEVE ME!"

Page 260

THE SMUGGLER

BY

ELLA MIDDLETON TYBOUT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY
HOWARD EVERETT SMITH



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1907



"AGAINST YOURS," AND THEY

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OCT 8

1907

✓

TO
G. J. C.
AND
B. S. McK.

20/11



OCT 8

1907

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TO
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AND
B. S. McK.

20/11

ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE SMUGGLER



CHAPTER I

IF Elizabeth did not indulge in hay-fever every year, and, consequently, have to be very careful about breathing where there is vegetation, it would never have happened; or, rather, we would not have been mixed up with it.

I don't know, after all, whether it was not Gabrielle's gold beads that were to blame, just as much as Elizabeth's hay-fever; for if the string had not broken, everything would have been all right.

Gabrielle and Elizabeth are friends. They know each other's inmost thoughts, and their past lives contain no reservations whatever from one another—which seems a little hard on the men whose pictures they have framed and preserved as relics.

I am their friend also, but I still have a

few undivulged thoughts, as well as a modest number of reservations. My name is Eliza, but I prefer to spell it Elise, and perhaps I am a little envious of the other two, having lost my own *alter ego* by her marriage and never replaced her. However, that doesn't belong to the story, which really begins on the steamer that carried us to Canada.

Elizabeth had heard of an island village up there where hay-fever was unknown, and she read us so many extracts concerning it from a booklet she kept in her work-basket that about the first of June we cut adrift from our respective families and started off to spend the summer there. We could do this with propriety, for we had all passed the pin-feather age, although I wish it distinctly understood we were still a long way from being stringy about the throat.

We were sitting on the deck of the steamer, watching the moonlight on the water and enjoying ourselves very much indeed, when a man came around the corner of the cabin and sat down near us, as, of course, he had a

perfect right to do. Suddenly Gabrielle, who was next him, jumped up and clutched my arm.

"Come away," she whispered. "Come away."

And, of course, we came forthwith. She was quite pale and trembling when we reached the cabin, and for a few minutes was unable to satisfy our curiosity; but at last she spoke.

"He threw a chair into the water," she said, in an awed voice.

"Oh!" said Elizabeth, with evident disgust, "is *that* all? I thought it was something interesting."

"It was quite enough," insisted Gabrielle. "I was afraid he might throw me next. You should have seen his face and heard him muttering."

"What did he mutter?" Elizabeth liked the whole of a story or none at all.

"I couldn't hear. But I think"—Gabrielle glanced around apprehensively—"I think he's crazy, and I don't like being on a boat

with an unguarded insane man. You never know what they are going to do. Besides, he looked at me."

I did not blame him there, for Gabrielle is well worth looking at, especially when she is gazing at the moon with the uplifted expression she reserves for that purpose. I sometimes wonder why she doesn't think some man on earth worth it, but she says distance lends enchantment in such matters, and I suppose she knows her own affairs best.

"Perhaps his keeper is somewhere around," speculated Elizabeth. "Let's go back and see if he is still there."

So we reconnoitred stealthily, and saw him sitting quietly smoking and not looking at all dangerous—a rather tall, spare man in blue serge clothes, with a cap pulled down over his eyes, and the air of one who is quite satisfied with his surroundings. It was a cool night, and the deck was almost deserted, so he had our secluded corner behind the cabin all to himself, and we could stand just

outside the door and examine him at our leisure.

"He looks just like anybody else," said Elizabeth, plainly disappointed.

"I did n't say he had a hump on his back," returned Gabrielle indignantly. "I said he threw a chair overboard—and so he did."

"It is a new way of beginning a flirtation," I murmured, "but customs differ in various places. Perhaps you should have sent your chair after it, by way of acknowledging the attention. Oh!"

For at that moment he leaned forward, looked with interest at the chair beside him, felt its back and legs, poised it lightly in the air, and shot it over the railing into the water below, where we saw it bobbing in the foam in our wake.

"*There!*" triumphed Gabrielle. "Now what do you say?"

We said nothing, for just then he reached for another chair. This time, however, he was not bent on destruction, for he merely detached a dark object hanging on its back. For

the second time Gabrielle clutched my unfortunate arm, which was quite bruised with her attentions.

"It's my bag!" she exclaimed. "My new shopping bag. I left it hanging on my chair—and he's opening it! Oh, the wretch!"

The "wretch" proceeded to investigate the contents of the bag, and carefully examined each article as he drew it forth. First a pair of gloves, and then a handkerchief, which he held critically to his nose after scrutinizing the monogram.

"I hope he likes it!" ejaculated Gabrielle, in an indignant whisper.

Next a small powder puff and a bit of chamois skin (regarded with tolerant amusement), a stubby pencil minus a point and much dented from thoughtful biting (having been used to calculate our expenses), twenty-five cents, three street-car tickets, a latch-key, and a square card, at which he looked long and earnestly.

"It is a good thing you wear your money around your neck," remarked Elizabeth, but

Gabrielle pointed an outraged finger at the unconscious blue serge back.

"It is our picture," she said—"we three together. Did you ever!"

Finding the moonlight not bright enough for his purpose, he moved nearer the cabin window, happening as he did so to glance behind him. Springing to his feet, he lifted his cap and advanced toward us, bag in hand, but with one accord we turned and fled. It was best to take no chances within reach of his hands. We had no desire to follow the chairs over the railing.

I went with Gabrielle and Elizabeth to their state-room, where we spent some time in discussing the strange incident and the fact that our picture was still in the supposed lunatic's possession. At length I bade them good-night and set out to find my own berth, as we had not been fortunate enough to get adjoining rooms.

In the saloon I found the stewardess, who at once accosted me, with an apologetic cough.

“Oh, if you please, miss, she said, “could I speak to you?”

The burden of her speech was a request that I share my state-room with a lady who had not been able to secure one, and who was much fatigued.

“And I thought, miss,” she concluded, “that as you have a room to yourself, perhaps you would be so kind as to let her have the spare berth, since it is the only one on the boat. Would you mind obliging her?”

I did mind very much, and was about to say so in no uncertain language when the stewardess twitched my skirt warningly.

“That’s her,” she whispered, “over there under the light. Speak low, if you please, miss, and don’t go for to refuse the poor dear a bed—don’t, now.”

I looked in the direction indicated, and felt glad I had not spoken. It was a comparatively young face which rested against the back of the chair, but so pale, so worn, so unutterably weary, that one wondered instinctively what blow fate had seen fit to deal this

woman to so rob her of her girlhood. The pitiless glare of the electric light fell directly upon her, accentuating the purple shadows beneath her eyes and the hollows in her cheeks, while her listless pose suggested heart-sickness as well as fatigue. One hand lay on the arm of her chair, and as I advanced toward her I noticed the gleam of her wedding ring.

"The stewardess tells me you have no state-room," I said. "I am alone, and shall be glad to share mine with you."

The heavy lids lifted slowly, and I found myself looking into a pair of wistful dark eyes with an unanswered question in them.

"Thank you," she said, in a sweet, low voice. "You are most kind. I know it is not pleasant to share one's room with a stranger, but I will come gladly, for I am very tired. My husband——"

She paused abruptly and a faint color tinged her cheeks as a man approached and bent over her with an unmistakable air of possession.

"It's no use, Juliet," he said; "I can't get you a state-room at any price, and you are regularly done up, too! We must manage with one of these sofas."

"It is all right, dear," she replied gently. "This young lady is good enough to offer to share her room with me. My husband, Mr. Graham, Miss ——"

I supplied the name and bowed to Mr. Graham, looking curiously at him as I listened to his effusive thanks.

The man evidently possessed the vitality his wife lacked. His every movement indicated that he was filled to the finger-tips with vibrant, pulsing life, and one admired him with the admiration one involuntarily accords a perfect specimen of the animal kingdom, whether man or beast. Perhaps his lips were a trifle too full and red, and his teeth rather unpleasantly dazzling when they gleamed under his dark mustache; perhaps, also, there was something in his large black eyes now and then which might cause a woman to blush and turn aside if he looked too long at her;

but his manner was very gentle as he bent over his wife, and he collected her wraps and helped her to rise with genuine solicitude.

The stewardess was waiting to show Mrs. Graham the room, and I decided to remain in the saloon until she had retired, so I sat down in a green plush chair and amused myself watching my fellow-passengers and speculating as to their destinations. I had just determined that a fat old lady opposite was the mother of a large family and going to visit a married daughter, when the cabin door opened and Mr. Graham returned alone.

He raised his hat as he passed, hesitated a moment, then seated himself on the arm of an adjoining chair.

"We really owe you a debt of gratitude," he said. "Of course I can get along perfectly well anywhere, but Mrs. Graham is not strong. She has had a tiresome journey, and to-night seemed to be the last straw. I suppose you noticed how awfully done up she was."

"She certainly seemed very tired."

"She will be all right to-morrow, after a

night's rest—thanks to you. We are going to spend the summer in Canada. I think the climate there will benefit her, it is so invigorating. And you? Are you also bound for Canada, and are you travelling alone?"

I replied somewhat curtly that I was with friends, for I had no desire to prolong the conversation. Mr. Graham, however, lingered with the manner of one who has something on his mind, but finds expression difficult. At last he rose and said good-night, after offering to look out for our baggage when he landed in the morning.

"And, by the way," he remarked carelessly, "don't be alarmed if my wife should talk a bit in her sleep. She does it now and then, especially if she is overtired. She is apt to dream, I think, and sometimes talks a lot of gibberish. I trust you may not be disturbed, but I thought I ought to warn you. Good-night again, and many thanks."


So Mrs. Graham talked in her sleep! I thought rather ruefully of my prospects for a peaceful night as I slowly walked the length

of the cabin—for mine was an outside state-room, and it was necessary to go on deck to reach it.

The moon shone brilliantly, a path of silver light falling across the water, which rippled and sparkled alluringly. I was so fascinated by the beauty of the scene that when I reached my door I did not enter at once, but leaned over the railing, watching the white foam that marked our course, and quite forgetful of the flight of time.

After a while two men approached, and one of them fitted a key in the door next mine. As he stooped to examine the lock, the moonlight shone full upon his face, and I recognized our friend in blue serge with the strange aversion to chairs. I wondered if the person with him was an attendant, and hoped the partition wall was substantial. I was also conscious of a strong desire to waken Gabrielle and Elizabeth and seek shelter with them.

The light was burning in my state-room when at last I forced myself to enter it, and Mrs. Graham lay asleep in the lower berth,



her lips slightly parted and her face resting upon her hand. Nature had meant to be kind to this woman, and had been liberal indeed with her gifts. The lashes which swept the pale cheeks were dark and curling, like the luxuriant hair carelessly pushed aside on the pillow, while the face itself, though thin and haggard, had evidently once been a perfect oval, with a singular purity of outline and innocence of expression.

As noiselessly as possible, I made my preparations for the night and climbed into my berth, turning off the electric light with a sense of relief that the switch was within easy reach of my hand.

I lay staring into the darkness, wide awake and alert to every sound. A murmur of voices came from the next room, interspersed with occasional subdued laughter, and at last I heard a window opened, and some one apparently leaned out with an ejaculation of relief.

"Jove, what a night! And to think of wasting it in a cell like this! Blake, you old

sinner, have you no soul for the beautiful? Look at the light on the water."

The reply was inaudible. Evidently Blake had gone sensibly to bed, but the voice continued undaunted:

"I say, would n't it be jolly to dive off the railing and swim a mile or so? I declare, I've half a mind to do it!"

I caught my breath apprehensively. Suppose he *should* jump? A match was now scratched, and the odor of a cigarette floated through my slatted blind.

"Maybe you think you're on an ordinary steamer, Blake, but it's nothing of the kind. It is a royal barge belonging to the gods, and its carrying the Three Graces to attend Apollo—I'm Apollo, you understand, and Venus is n't in it this trip. I think—of course I'm not yet sure—but I think Thalia is the chosen one."

The berth creaked plaintively, and a second match was struck. Apparently Blake considered it wiser to join his patient at the window.

"Don't be an ass," he said, with a slow

drawl, but his companion merely whistled a few bars of an old song.

“ ‘How happy could I be with either, were t’other dear charmer away,’ eh, Blake?” he laughed. “That’s the way with this world—always too much or too little.”

“Quite enough for you, I think.”

“Not a bit of it. The thing I want most I lack, but some time, some how, I’m going to get it.”

Silence for a few moments, then he resumed more gravely:

“Of course it’s no end jolly to have you with me, Blake, but it is a queer business for you to take up, and I don’t altogether like it. You were built for better things.”

“It is interesting work, and said to require special fitness.”

“No doubt. Well, ‘it’s an ill wind,’ you know, and, since it blew you my way, I’ve no kick coming. But, old chap, there is no use in publishing what you are doing, and for both our sakes it is better you should pass simply as my guest.”

"As you please, Bennett. Now, for heaven's sake, come to bed."

I don't know whether I had actually been asleep, or whether I was merely in that delightful state of half-consciousness which precedes profound slumber, but suddenly I started up broad awake, with the echo of a cry ringing in my ears. Was I dreaming? I wondered, for I heard nothing but the sound of the waves against the boat.

Then it came again, from just beneath me, a sobbing, frightened cry, infinitely distressing to hear, and instinctively I turned on the light and jumped to the floor.

Mrs. Graham sat upright in her berth, her dark eyes looking blankly into space, and her hands tightly clasped.

"Not again, Harry," she moaned; "not again—*so soon*."

I took her hands in mine and spoke to her, calling her by name several times, and gradually the blank look in her eyes was replaced by utter bewilderment as she began to realize her surroundings.

"What is it?" she said. "What have I been doing?"

"You were dreaming," I suggested. "A bad dream, perhaps."

"A bad dream," she repeated; "yes, that's it—a bad dream. And only a dream, thank God!"

"But I've wakened you," she continued contritely, "and of course you are tired, too. I'm so sorry. Please go to sleep again, and I will try not to disturb you. I am all right indeed."

I put out the light and got back into my berth and lay there thinking about my companion and more than half expecting her to cry out again. Evidently she did not at once go to sleep, for I heard her sigh softly now and then, and once she whispered brokenly: "Only a dream, thank God, *only a dream!*"

CHAPTER II

WHEN I wakened the next morning I was alone, and should have been inclined to believe the preceding night a dream were it not for the pencilled words on a scrap of paper pinned to my counterpane, that thanked me for sharing my room and expressed the hope that we might meet again in the future.

It was raining when we landed, and upon reaching our hotel, after two hours' run by train and a half-hour spent in crossing troubled waters in an odious little steamer, we were not in a condition to be enthusiastic about our new quarters.

Elizabeth's booklet had said:

This well appointed house combines the comforts of home with the conveniences of the best hotels. The cozy bedrooms, spacious verandas, abundant, carefully prepared food, and cheerful, willing service appeal at once to the jaded traveller, offering all essential bodily comforts and refreshment; while nature's never ending panorama stretching away into space affords vistas pleasing to the eye, and the society of other cultured guests provides the mental stimulus so necessary for true recreation.

Even now, however, I hesitate to recall our first week in this ideal retreat, when it rained without ceasing and the beauties of nature were left to the imagination, while the house itself proved a delusion and a snare.

Elizabeth got along best, for she immediately inspected her wardrobe and ripped up two skirts and a shirt-waist preparatory to making them over with circles of lace insertion let in by hand; her ardor was a little dampened when she discovered she had no lace and nowhere to buy it, but she rallied bravely and resorted to fagotting instead, with satisfactory results.

Gabrielle and I were not so fortunate, for experience had taught us not to attempt to improve on our raiment, and after we had written to everybody we knew and told them what a delightful summer we anticipated, we had reached the end of our resources, and I only stared absently out of the window, while Gabrielle took to reviewing her past life, which is proof positive that she is very blue indeed.



“What use have I been in the world?” she demanded, lying face downward on her bed. “I do nothing but eat and sleep and enjoy myself, year after year.”

“You are lots of use to me,” interrupted Elizabeth cheerfully. “Would you cut these sleeves elbow length?”

“No, I would n’t; I don’t like them.”

“Well, I *do*,” and Elizabeth clashed her scissors vigorously (elbow sleeves being a point upon which they differed emphatically), while Gabrielle pulled a pillow under her head and continued solemnly:

“I have quite decided that next winter shall be different. When we go back to Washington I intend to read something improving every day, and to spend the money I generally waste on theatres in flowers for the Children’s Hospital; and I will read to the blind, and take them up and down to the Congressional Library to those entertainments, you know.”

We exchanged smiles over her unconscious head, for the blind had often before been

promised the pleasure of her society without reaping any actual benefit therefrom, and reference to them always indicated that her spirits had reached the zero point.

“Let us go out,” I suggested, feeling that something must be done to cause a diversion; “even if we get wet, it will be better than staying here.”

So we donned our rain-coats and walked through the little village, with its modest frame dwellings and occasional pretentious hotel, up a hill and straight out on a bluff overlooking the sea. There, isolated and alone, was a vacant cottage with a covered veranda.

I shall never forget our first sight of the ocean—all gray like the enveloping fog, except where the white-crested waves rolled highest, with wonderful green shadows and opalescent lights. As we looked, the mist lifted, the sun came out, and we saw the vast Atlantic stretching sparkling away into space, restless, awesome, and irresistibly alluring, with its vague suggestion of hidden marvels just beyond the horizon.

Elizabeth beckoned from the turn of the veranda, which ran quite about the house, and we joined her, speechless with admiration. Evidently the island ended here in a sharp point, for while on one hand was the ocean, on the other was water also, but closely dotted with little green islands, gay with flowers and comfortable looking houses. Just beyond was the strip of land we knew to be the border of the United States.

High above, upon the bluff, stood the little cottage, commanding an unobstructed view on every side. There was an air of coziness about it, deserted though it was, which made us homesick in spite of ourselves. It was built of shingle, now beautifully gray and weather-beaten, and had fascinating latticed windows and overhanging gables, with an outside chimney of rough stone. Anything more unlike the clapboard houses of the village could not be imagined.

"How I *would* like to get inside!" exclaimed Elizabeth longingly.

"There ain't no reason you can't," said a

gruff voice behind us. I almost lost my balance, but turned to meet the intruder.

He seemed entirely harmless, merely an old man with a door-key, who explained that he was the caretaker and came up after each rain to be sure everything was all right; so we followed him eagerly.

If the outside of the cottage was attractive, the inside was irresistible. It consisted of a moderately large living-room with a stone fireplace, a small dining-room, a smaller kitchen, three bedrooms, a bath, and a little square entrance hall.

It was furnished, too. As Gabrielle said, modestly, it could not have been done better had we attended to it ourselves. There were large, comfortable wicker chairs and couches, upholstered in chintz, chintz hangings, delightful little tables, and, last, but not least, a generous supply of the necessities of life in the shape of bed and table linen, cooking utensils, table appointments of china and plated ware, and, in short, everything one could desire.

"Oh!" exclaimed Elizabeth, after exhausting her supply of adjectives, "how I should like to spend the summer right here!"

"Well," returned the caretaker, "the house is to let."

It was the beginning of the end. We all knew it privately, although we did no more than casually ascertain the rent; but Elizabeth conversed aside with the old man, while Gabrielle tried each chair in turn, and I discovered a light arranged over the couch where one might lie and read luxuriously on stormy evenings.

"Of course," said Gabrielle, as we turned reluctantly away, "it is out of the question for us to take it."

"Of course," we echoed; but Elizabeth added that the rent was ridiculously low, and I referred to the view from the window and the utter absence of vines or any sort of verdure, so necessary to combatting hay-fever.

We wanted to go back along the shore as far as possible, so descended a very steep

little flight of steps leading down to a small shed or boat-house, belonging to the cottage.

A woman stood on the little slip, looking out over the water. She turned as we approached, and I recognized Mrs. Graham. The keen air had brought a little color into her face, but her lips looked blue and pinched, and her voice, as she responded to my surprised greeting, shook uncontrollably.

"I am waiting for my husband," she said. "He went out early this morning in his boat, and has not yet returned. Our cottage is just beyond the bluff, but I had no idea we were your neighbors."

I explained that we were at the hotel, and expressed the hope that she felt rested after her journey, but she had resumed her scrutiny of the ocean and did not reply to my inquiry.

"He was to have been home by noon," she said, "and I have been standing here two hours. Sail-boats are treacherous, and Harry is so reckless. Ah!"

The ejaculation was one of relief, as a white sail appeared and headed for the slip.

"I'm coming to see you," I called, as we walked on, but the conclusion was forced upon me that she had forgotten my existence.

"Why do you suppose they use that forlorn little slip," I inquired, "when there are plenty of good landing-places further on?"

But the subject did not seem to interest Elizabeth, whom I had addressed, for she merely remarked with a sigh:

"I just hate to go back to that old hotel."

"But of course we could never rent the cottage," said Gabrielle, the prudent.

"Oh, of course not!" we agreed, and ascended the steps of the hotel in gloomy silence.

In the hall there were mountains of trunks, covered with a bewildering quantity of labels, and a subdued air of excitement prevailed, indicating that the new arrivals were worthy of consideration. As soon as possible, we investigated the register, and found that Lord Wilfrid and Lady Edith Campbell, of London, England, were enjoying the hospitality of the house.

It was no use pretending that we were not impressed, for we *were*, and we read the names over several times aloud to see how they sounded. It was our first encounter with British aristocracy outside of books, and we hurried up-stairs to make fresh toilets in their honor.

They did not appear until we had nearly finished dinner, and we were so interested watching for them that we forgot to complain about the food.

Lord Wilfrid was disappointing, although he had the drooping blonde mustache and bored manner we were familiar with on the stage. I say this frankly because we learned later that we had been unjust and that his unprepossessing appearance was simply the result of unrequited affection, which of course went very hard with one who was accustomed to having the world at his feet—especially the feminine world.

Lady Edith told us all about it after we got to know her very well, and explained that they had come to this quiet retreat, where

they were sure to meet no one, to allow her brother to regain his usual poise before visiting their uncle, the Governor General of Canada. She added that the length of their stay depended upon the benefit he derived from it, and hoped we would do what we could toward diverting him. We said we would.

Of course all this happened quite naturally as time went on, and I only mention it here to show how wrong it is to judge by appearances, for we thought Lord Wilfrid looked ill-natured and grumpy, whereas he was really suffering from a broken heart.

His sister, however, was all that could be desired, and suggested Lady Clara Vere de Vere in a very satisfactory manner. In fact, I heard Gabrielle murmur: " 'The daughter of a hundred earls,' " as Lady Edith swept through the doorway, and Elizabeth quoted: " 'The languid light of her proud eyes,' " when she inspected the somewhat dingy menu.

I don't think I said anything, for I was so absorbed in wondering whether the ripples of her golden hair were natural or acquired that

I forgot everything else ; but when we met her the next day and felt the charm of her personality I was ready to swear that everything about her was genuine.

So absorbed were we that evening in discussing the brother and sister that we almost forgot the cottage ; but I saw Elizabeth busily engaged with pencil and paper as we were preparing for bed, and was not altogether surprised to hear her voice from the next room after the lights were out.

“If we got a competent woman who would do our washing,” she remarked, “it would not be much more expensive than staying here. I have calculated everything.”

“But we could never find such a woman,” Gabrielle said, interested but incredulous.

“The old man said his sister would come,” returned Elizabeth. “Of course I did not engage her, but I know where to find her.”

The next day we rented the cottage, engaged the competent woman, and notified the clerk at the hotel that our rooms would be at his disposal at the end of the week.

CHAPTER III

WE saw a good deal of the Campbells—or at least of Lady Edith—during the following week. She was unquestionably lovely, from the crown of her golden head to the tip of her dainty shoe, and, moreover, was endowed with that most enviable gift called personal magnetism; her smile was a caress, and the inflection of her voice implied unqualified pleasure in the society of the person whom she happened to address.

We took her to the cottage, and she went over it with genuine interest, suggesting slight rearrangement of furniture, and lingering on the veranda as though reluctant to leave.

“I quite envy you,” she said, with a trace of sadness in her voice. “You will be so cozy up here, and—the hotel is horrid, is it not?”

“You must come and see us very often,” said Elizabeth, and Gabrielle and I echoed the invitation eagerly.

“How good of you!” she replied. “I shall

be only too glad to come. And I may bring Wilfrid sometimes? We are both rather forlorn strangers in a strange land, you know."

We hastened to say we would be delighted to see Lord Wilfrid at any time, and Elizabeth, who had volunteered to keep house, added that tea would be on tap every afternoon and guests very welcome.

So we took possession of the cottage on the bluff and settled down for a long, lazy summer.

It *was* nice. That first evening as we sat on the veranda after our comfortable dinner, listening to the murmur of the waves and watching the myriad of stars overhead, we spoke contemptuously of the stuffy little hotel, and pitied those confined within its walls.

Elizabeth had heard from home that day, and told us that a man her father had recently met owned an island near-by and had pledged himself to call upon us. Elizabeth's father is a general in the army, and has hosts of acquaintances, so his daughter is quite accus-

tomed to encountering them wherever she goes.

"When do you expect the old gentleman?" inquired Gabrielle languidly.

"He is n't old at all," flashed Elizabeth—"at least, I don't think so. And, of course, he has sail-boats and things if he has a summer home on an island. He might be very useful."

"Ask him to dinner," I suggested, secure in the conviction that our "competent woman" could really cook.

"And ask Lord Wilfrid and Lady Edith the same evening," supplemented Gabrielle. "Let us impress him at once with our intimacy with the nobility."

"Have we a butler and twelve footmen, that we should give dinners?" inquired Elizabeth, with withering sarcasm. "When I entertain landed proprietors and members of the peerage I don't want to feel nervous about anything, so we won't attempt dinners while I'm housekeeper."

We did later, just the same, and our little

dining-room was the scene of several merry nondescript meals, called dinner by courtesy, and thoroughly enjoyed by every one. But this is anticipating.

The next day as we were all three leaning out of the broad window of my room, in an interval of repose after unpacking and settling, we heard steps on the gravel path, and before we could withdraw our heads two men turned the corner and started for the front door. From the hand of the taller dangled Gabrielle's black shopping-bag, and although he wore gray clothes and a straw hat instead of blue serge and a small cap we recognized the man on the steamer, and were consequently petrified with astonishment.

"Don't let them in," whispered Gabrielle, who always has her wits about her in an emergency. "Tell Mary Anne to say, 'Not at home.' "

They were directly under the window now, and we feared to move, almost to breathe, lest we attract their attention; but it was just at this crucial moment that my side-comb elected

to fall out and land with considerable force upon the aforesaid straw hat. Of course its owner promptly looked up, and equally of course we precipitately retreated.

"Do you think he saw us?" gasped Elizabeth and I simultaneously as the doorbell rang; but Gabrielle had fled to the hall, where we heard her whispering hoarsely to Mary Anne over the banister.

We also heard that invaluable factotum's assurance that the ladies had just gone to the village, and a polite expression of regret, accompanied by a promise to call again.

We stole again to the window as our visitors retreated, and saw them pause, examine my side-comb, and calmly drop it in Gabrielle's bag, which had not been left with Mary Anne, as, of course, it should have been.

"At this rate, Bennett," said a laughing voice "you'll soon be able to open a junk-shop. But I must say, old chap, we were very neatly snubbed. Wherefore?"

"I don't know," replied Bennett, "but I mean to find out, for I'm coming again very

soon. I assure you, Blake, the picture does n't begin——”

The rest of the sentence was lost as the two men disappeared around the corner. We straightway held a council of war.


“I suppose,” said Elizabeth, “he has lucid intervals and his attendant humors him, but this is no reason why we should be victimized. Let us caution Mary Anne.”

So we descended in a body to the kitchen and solemnly warned Mary Anne that the day she admitted our late visitor we would immediately part company. She in turn solemnly assured us that if he crossed the threshold it would be over her dead body, so we felt somewhat comforted. Elizabeth picked up the cards and looked at them.

“Mr. John Clinton Blake,” she read aloud, “and Mr. Gordon Bennett.”

The card dropped from her hand, and she collapsed into the wood-box.

“What’s the matter now?” demanded Gabrielle, fishing her friend out of its capacious depths.



"Gordon Bennett," said Elizabeth, "is the man who knows father, and who owns the island."

We stared at each other in incredulous silence, then sank down upon Mary Anne's immaculate floor and laughed until we were exhausted.

"I feel sure," said Elizabeth, when she could articulate, "that it is not the same man. This is some impostor."

"Mayhap," suggested Mary Anne, who had been an interested listener—"mayhap, miss, 'e's a smuggler."

Mary Anne had not long left the mother country, and her manipulation of the letter h was as agreeable to our American ears as Lady Edith's faultless enunciation. Just now she was regarding us with the manner of one who possesses unimparted information.

"It's quite hawful, miss," she resumed, dropping her voice to a whisper, "and it do give a body the creeps, so it do. But they say the smuggling wot goes on 'ereabout is most hextraordinary."

“Smuggling?” repeated Gabrielle.

“Yes, miss; taking things in over the border without the duty—which I do say is a sin and a shame to ‘ave to pay, so it is.”

“It is perfectly right to pay it, Mary Anne. Everybody should obey the laws of a country.”

So spoke the general’s daughter, but she carefully avoided looking at us, for we all intended investing heavily in furs before our return and getting them in without cost.

“Yes, miss,” replied Mary Anne, without enthusiasm, and Gabrielle inquired in rather a muffled voice what the miscreants smuggled.

“Oh, most hanythink that comes ‘andy, miss. Fur, cloth, gloves, humbrellas, preshus jools—mostly di’monds. The feller they’re lookin’ fur deals in di’monds. Quite the gentleman ‘e is, too, so I’ve ‘eard.”

Mary Anne proceeded to tell us, with much circumlocution and attention to detail, that the previous summer a famous band of smugglers had carried on successful operations under the very noses of our customs officials

located in the little town just across the water, and had completely baffled said officials in their efforts to uphold law and justice.

She added that a police boat had recently been assigned to the station, which patrolled the shore with flashing searchlight, ready to pounce upon any unwary small craft lurking without lights in dark coves or inlets, and that a large reward had been offered for the capture of the chief offender.

"But, law!" finished Mary Anne exultantly, "wot good does that do when 'e can stay 'igh and dry this side the border? Wot's 'e goin' to the States fur, I'd like to know, when 'e can stay 'ere, Miss Elise, and waller in di'monds?"

I admitted that he would be foolish to thus tempt Providence, and Mary Anne resumed, thoughtfully pinching up the skin on her round red arms.

"But they're lookin' fur 'im, pore feller, and the pollis is 'ungry fur the money wot'll land 'im in jail. No common man 'e is, they say, but mayhap one of these 'ere islanders

wot comes fur the summer, with their steam yachts and their fine clo'es. Ah, well! Jail's no wuss fur 'im than fur the likes o' us. And seein' that the gentleman to-day was very likely lookin' and civil spoken, but quite unbeknownst to me, I wondered—beggin' your parding, Miss Elizabeth—if it was 'im I 'ear so much talk about in the village. Will you be havin' clear soup ag'in to-night miss?"

"As you please, Mary Anne;" Elizabeth spoke absently, and joined us in the living-room with an air of suppressed excitement.

"Do you think it's possible?" she inquired, laying Mr. Gordon Bennett's card on the table as though fearing it might explode.

"No, I don't," said Gabrielle bluntly. "It's just servants' gossip. Don't think about it any more."

Of course after that we talked of nothing else, and when Lord Wilfrid and Lady Edith came up that evening we told them all about it, beginning with our experience on the steamer. Lord Wilfrid disposed of the steamer episode in one succinct word.

“Drunk,” he said, with a shrug of his shoulders, and really it seemed not improbable, now that it was suggested to us.

Lord Wilfrid appeared in a new light that evening, he was so talkative and agreeable; he also corroborated Mary Anne’s story about the smugglers, and gave us a good deal of information on the subject. The village was quite excited, he said, and the fishermen who hired sail-boats could talk of nothing else.

“I confess,” he said, with his slow drawl, “my sympathies are with the poor devil of a smuggler. He must be a clever chap, I fancy, to be worth such a large reward.”

“According to Mary Anne, he can ‘waller in di’monds,’ ” remarked Gabrielle, laughing.

“Ah, indeed!” said Lord Wilfrid. “Opulent but uncomfortable, I should imagine. Well, I wish him luck; may he——”

“Wilfrid *dear*,” interrupted his sister, in laughing expostulation, “and you a magistrate at home!”

“Well, suppose I am,” returned Lord Wilfrid; “it is my misfortune, not my fault. And I’m sure my sympathies are nearly always with those wretched poachers we condemn so glibly.”

I instantly conceived a warmer liking for Lord Wilfrid, for I thought such sentiments worthy of admiration, and I could see that Gabrielle and Elizabeth were likewise impressed. Indeed, now that he had cast aside his mantle of sulky silence, he proved himself very pleasant indeed, and even suggested sailing parties and various other ways of passing the time.

“For,” he remarked, “I think this is as good a place as anywhere to stop and breathe a bit, and it’s so jolly well isolated, don’t you know, that one is moderately safe from one’s dear five hundred friends; so I fancy it will be quite a while before we move on—provided Edith can tolerate her accommodations.”

I thought I saw a shadow cross his sister’s face, but she answered him gently that where he was happy she was also, so he turned to



Gabrielle and told her he had hired a boat by the week and was ready to take us out at any time.

“We have a boat-house but no boat,” remarked Gabrielle, “and we can’t get inside it because Mary Anne’s brother inconsiderately lost the key.”

“Perhaps one of mine will fit,” suggested Lord Wilfrid, producing his key-ring. “Let us try and see.”

So we all went down the steep flight of steps to the little boat-house beneath the bluff, and waited on the slip while he tried the various keys with no success.

“We are right under the cottage,” said Elizabeth, “and yet one can hardly see it. I don’t believe I like it down here—it is so dark and creepy. Suppose we go back.”

The water washed against the slip with a sullen sound, and it was undoubtedly very dark—so dark we could hardly distinguish one from another. Suddenly, however, a beam of light illuminated the little dock, so dazzling in its brilliancy that we were

completely blinded and stood blinking helplessly.

"It's a searchlight," I said, with great originality, and added by way of encouragement: "It will be gone in an instant."

But it was n't. I don't know how long we stood motionless in the white light, but it seemed an eternity to me, and Gabrielle said afterward that she felt perfectly transparent and as though her every thought was blazoned abroad for the world to read.

Lord Wilfrid leaned against the door of the boat-house, shading his eyes with his hand. Elizabeth, who stood beside him, said he swore softly under his breath. For my part, I did not blame him, for certainly it was most unpleasant; but so also was the intense darkness into which we were plunged by the unexpected removal of the light, and with one accord we made for the steps leading back to the cottage.

It was then that Elizabeth lost her nerve and gave a stifled scream. This is liable to happen at exciting moments—when she en-

counters a mouse or a spider, for instance; but that night, when we were talking it over in my room, she told us she could not understand why she did it just then, but she all at once felt very queer and oppressed, and relief of some sort was necessary. So she screamed in a suppressed, choking way quite heart-rending to hear, and instantly the searchlight was back again, laying bare our very souls and prying into every nook and corner of the slip and the steps leading down to it. This time we did not stand petrified, but scurried up the steps as fast as possible, and the light obligingly followed us, marking a white pathway all the way back to the cottage.

Gabrielle gave a vexed little laugh as we regained the veranda; she dislikes to show the white feather at any time, but especially at a false alarm.

"One would think we had never seen a searchlight before," she said, as Lord Wilfrid drew a chair forward and she sat down.

"Look!" she continued. "There is our enemy, I think."

We looked in the direction she pointed, and saw what appeared to be a very small tug-boat about to vanish around the point.


"Perhaps," I suggested, "it is the boat looking for smugglers, and they suspected us. Would n't that be exciting?"

"No," said Elizabeth, with a little shiver; "it would be horrid. I should not like it a bit."

"Why," said Lady Edith, "this poor child is quite white and shaking, and there was nothing to be afraid of, after all. Let us go indoors. I think I would like the lamplight myself."

So we went inside, lighted the lamp with its red shade, and grew quite cheerful and happy again, while Lord Wilfrid told us about big game hunting in Africa, and our other guest and Elizabeth held a low-voiced conversation concerning hand-made lingerie and other subjects of mutual interest.

It seemed to me Lady Edith was tired to-night, for she was paler than usual, and sometimes her head drooped a little wearily, as



though its weight of hair was burdensome. Her lips smiled readily, however, and I got so absorbed watching her dimples come and go I entirely forgot to show any interest in the pursuit of big game, which, as Gabrielle said afterward, was certainly rude on my part, for Lord Wilfrid was doing his best to be entertaining.

When at last they rose to go, and had even started down the steps of the veranda, Lady Edith turned and came back alone, laying her slender white hand on mine and slipping her other arm around Elizabeth's waist.

"I hope you will pardon me," she said gently "I do not mean to be officious, and of course at home we looked at such things differently——"

She paused as though she found expression difficult, and then continued with some hesitation:

"But you are just three girls living here alone, and I've been thinking about what you told us to-night, and it has made me a little uncomfortable. It is so easy to be imposed

upon that were I in your place I would be very cautious about admitting promiscuous young men. Now, please don't misunderstand me, will you?"

She looked anxiously into our eyes as she spoke, and as we involuntarily smiled in response she kissed us and rejoined her brother without another word. It was her first advance beyond the ordinary courtesies of mere acquaintanceship, and we were gratified as well as surprised, for with all her grace of manner she had an air of reserve difficult to penetrate, even had we been bold enough to attempt it.

Her words carried weight, too, for when Mr. Gordon Bennett repeated his call within the week he was informed that the ladies begged to be excused, and Elizabeth wrote home that she did not like things she had heard about him, and did not think she cared to know him at all.

We sat for a long time that night by the open window in my room, watching the brightly lighted boats threading their way

among the islands, for Elizabeth said the ocean seemed so wide and lonely out of their own window she did not care to look at it.

“And,” she continued, pushing the sleeve of her blue kimono away from her arm, “as for that boat-house, I will never go there again after dark. I had the queerest feeling!”

“Ghosts,” suggested Gabrielle, “or perhaps rats. They would have the same effect on you, would n’t they?”

“Well, you may laugh,” said Elizabeth solemnly, “and I know I acted like a fool, but I was just sure some one was there—or *something*. I felt as though some one besides ourselves was *breathing*. Oh, I can’t explain it at all, but I was next to the boat-house, and something moved inside. Maybe it was a rat, but anyhow I don’t go down there any more after dark; for while I might be able to cope with men, provided I had on my best clothes and my most engaging expression, rats and mice and spiders are too much for me, and I don’t care who knows it.”

CHAPTER IV

A few days later I paid a visit to Mrs. Graham. We could see her cottage from the path which led to the village, and every time I passed it I had an uncomfortable feeling that she was lonely and perhaps ill, and that I ought to be neighborly. So at last I went.

It was a most unprepossessing little clap-board house, evidently built for the sole purpose of affording a shelter, for certainly no time or thought had been wasted on verandas or other unnecessary, though agreeable, accessories. As I stood on the narrow front steps, waiting for my knock to be answered, I shivered instinctively and wondered if, after all, her summer would prove very beneficial.

Mrs. Graham herself opened the door, with an exclamation of pleasure.

"This is very nice," she said, "and you are especially welcome this morning, for sometimes one's thoughts are but indifferent society, are they not?"

“Well,” I remarked, as I seated myself on the chair she indicated, “so we are really neighbors, after all! Are you settled yet, and do you like your new home? We are quite in love with ours.”

“Settled!” she said, with a slight shrug. “Well, yes, I suppose so. But don’t call it home, please—four bare walls, two windows, and a door. Is that home?”

“But,” I suggested, “why not look through the window at the ocean?”

“Ah, the ocean!” she interrupted. “How I hate it! Always rolling, always changing; so deceitful, with its treacherous laughing water, and so cruel. I dislike salt air anywhere, and this seems to me the most obnoxious I ever breathed. I do not see how I am going to live through this summer.”

I listened in silent astonishment, and Mrs. Graham paused with a short laugh.

“Pray excuse me,” she said; “you see, I’m from the South, and I love the warmth, the flowers, and the many, many trees. My child is there, too. You could not expect me to leave

him in Virginia and be happy in Canada, could you?"

"Why not bring him to Canada also?"

"Oh, no, no!" she said, with unnecessary vehemence. "He is better there—far better. See, this is his picture. Do you wonder I am rebellious at the separation? My mother writes that he is quite well and happy, and no longer frets for me. Think of that! He is already learning to do without me."

"He is like his father," I said, studying the laughing little face.

"Very like," she replied; "very, very like. Do you think," she continued slowly, "that the rearing of a child determines its after-life? I mean, do you believe in environment or heredity?"

I looked from the picture in my hand to the tense face of the mother, puzzled how to reply.

"I do not know," I faltered. "You see, I have never thought about it."

"Of course you have not!" she exclaimed. "Why should you? And how silly in me to



get started on my hobby so soon! I am apt to think every one is as much interested in children as I am, but I suppose that is the way with all mothers. A childless woman loses both the greatest pleasure and the greatest pain in life, and I do not know whether to pity or envy her."

There was a movement in the room above, and she held out her hand for the picture.

"I will put it away," she said hurriedly; "and let us talk of something else. Mr. Graham thinks I allow the boy to absorb me to the exclusion of everything else, and perhaps he is right."

Mr. Graham was coming down-stairs now. I listened to the descent of his slippered feet, and speculated idly whether he breakfasted every morning at eleven. He was evidently surprised to see me, and, I thought, not over-pleased, although there was no lack of cordiality in his greeting.

"So you caught me napping!" he remarked. "The fact is, I'm a lazy sinner at

the best of times—eh, Juliet? I'm extra late to-day, though, but as I only eat a bit of fruit with my roll and coffee, Mrs. Graham says it is no matter if our slavey does growl."

"You don't look as though you lived on rolls and coffee," I remarked, by way of keeping up the conversation.

"Oh, I make it up at lunch and dinner, I assure you. Is n't this a jolly little box?"

He gazed about the bare room with as much pleasure as though it contained the luxuries of a palace, and continued cheerfully:

"Just look out of the window—how's *that* for a view? And then the air we breathe night and day! Pure ozone—none of your strained, adulterated products, I can tell you! Already Mrs. Graham is like a different creature."

I glanced curiously at Mrs. Graham, but she refused to meet my eye.

"I have just been saying, Harry," she remarked, "how different this air is from the South, and how invigorating I find it."

I smothered a surprised ejaculation, and

rose to go. Surely my new friend was rather bewildering.

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Mr. Graham, "just wait a moment till I drink my coffee, and I'll walk along with you. I'm going to the village for the mail."

As the post-office was my ultimate destination also, I resumed my chair, and Mrs. Graham and I carried on a desultory conversation until he returned, hat in hand, and announced himself ready.

"You will come and see me often, will you not?" she said, holding my hand for a moment. "And you will not mind if I do not always return your visits? I do not go out very much."

"Nonsense!" returned her husband. "Rousing is just what you need. She should n't be such a recluse, should she?"

He put the question in a laughing voice, but it was evident he was really annoyed, so I started for the door, fearing I might unwittingly introduce another unwelcome subject if I lingered any longer.

I glanced furtively at Mr. Graham as we walked along, and more than once found him inspecting me in like manner. The third time I caught his eye he laughed good-naturedly.

"Both taking stock," he remarked, with calm nonchalance, "and both caught in the act. Well, do I pass muster?"

"I hope I have not been rude," I returned, a little vexed at his tone of easy familiarity; but he only laughed again, and began to talk about the climate and the country, showing a knowledge of the coast which surprised me.

"Surely," I exclaimed, "you have not learned all this since you have been here?"

"Oh, no," he returned; "I'm an old stager. The fact is, I spent several summers here when I was a young chap, and I'm very keen about it indeed. The sea regularly calls to me, and I'm never quite happy away from it."

"And Mrs. Graham?"

"Well, she don't know much about it as yet, but she's learning. I can't induce her to get into a boat, though—more's the pity."

"You are fond of sailing?"

“Very fond. When I get out in my catboat, I have no idea of the flight of time.”

I had a sudden vision of his wife’s figure waiting on the little dock. Doubtless she was destined to pass many anxious, expectant hours before the end of the summer.

Mr. Graham put our letters in his pocket with his own, for safe-keeping, and we turned our faces homeward.

On the outskirts of the village we met Lady Edith Campbell, sauntering along under her white parasol, the personification of dainty womanhood. She stopped to speak to me, and I was about to introduce my companion when, to my surprise, she held out her hand cordially.

“Why, Mr. Graham!” she exclaimed. “What are you doing in this remote corner of the world, and do you mean to cut your old friends?”

“I was so astonished, Lady Edith, that I doubted the evidence of my eyes. What brings you here, may I ask?”

“Wilfrid and I are touring for his health.

Is Mrs. Graham with you? How very charming! We all crossed from England together this spring," she explained for my benefit, "and we got to know each other very well, as people do on shipboard. Where is Mrs. Graham, and may I not go and see her this morning?"


Mr. Graham hesitated perceptibly, but I settled the question by holding out my hands for the letters and announcing that I meant to take a short cut to the cottage, and would see them again soon.

As usual, the girls were on the veranda, and I dropped the mail in Elizabeth's lap and flung myself exhaustedly into the hammock.

"I don't like paying visits," I remarked, "and I just hate taking walks with other people's husbands."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Gabrielle. "I rather like married men—then are so *safe*. They never suspect you of designs on them if you are pleasant, you know, and——"

"Why," interrupted Elizabeth, who had been turning over the mail, "what's this?"



What have you been buying, Elise? I'm going to look at it."

She held in her hand a small tissue-paper package about the size of an ordinary note envelope, and before I could disclaim any responsibility for it she had opened it and was examining the contents.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "look at this."

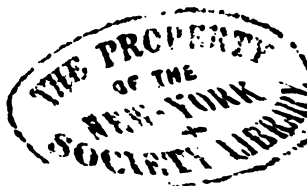
And, nothing loath, we joined her on the steps and looked also. The little package contained a small piece of blue ribbon, and carefully fastened to it was a ring of yellow hair. Such pretty hair it was, too! It might have come from the head of a little child, it was so soft and curled so daintily. In the sunshine it glittered like spun gold.

Elizabeth put her finger under the shining ringlet and looked at me doubtfully.

"Where did you get it," she inquired, "and what are you going to do with it?"

"I never saw it before," I replied, thoroughly puzzled.

Gabrielle lifted the ribbon, which was attached at the top to a piece of white note-



paper, evidently for the purpose of holding it straight.

"There is writing on it," she announced, and we literally put our heads together to decipher the words closely written in pencil.

"*'I need you,'*" read Elizabeth. "*'Do not delay.'*"

"There is more," I continued; "listen.

"And another voice is calling,
Oh, it cometh from the sea,
With an undertone of danger—
But there's work for you and me."

"What does it mean?" questioned Gabrielle. "Elise, you brought it here; you *must* know."

"Indeed I don't! I got the mail and——"

I paused as a sudden light dawned upon me.

"It's *his*," I exclaimed lucidly; and went on to explain that Mr. Graham had given me our mail very hurriedly, as Lady Edith was waiting for him, and doubtless the little package had slipped in between two letters.

Elizabeth was folding the tissue-paper carefully about the piece of ribbon.

"It is his, of course," she said, "and we must return it. But, oh dear! how I wish I had not opened it!"

"What I want to know," remarked Gabrielle, who was of a very inquiring disposition, "is this: why does Mr. Graham carry a piece of yellow hair around in his pocket, when his wife's hair is almost black?"

"I wish I had not opened it," repeated Elizabeth, who was really troubled. "How shall I ever explain doing it? And to whom shall we return it?"

We discussed the question long and anxiously, and finally determined to enclose the package in an envelope addressed to Mr. Graham, and send it to the cottage by Mary Anne, with a verbal message that he had given it to us by mistake.

"And," concluded Gabrielle, "we won't ask any questions as to whose hands it falls into, although I *should* like to know all about it."

CHAPTER V

AFTER all, it was Gabrielle who first opened the door in our wall of reserve and allowed Gordon Bennett to penetrate beyond it, and in the light of after events I was very glad, indeed, I was not responsible. It happened this way.

She had washed her hair and gone out in the sun to dry it, taking a book and a box of chocolates to help pass away the time, and, after wandering about a little, had established herself at the top of the flight of steps leading down to the boat-house, as the most secluded as well as the sunniest place she could find.

Gabrielle's hair is reddish brown, and when the sun shines upon it there are gold threads which glitter exceedingly, so we tell her she makes a point of going out of doors to dry it; but she says this is a slander, and she does it because fresh air and sunshine are good for the scalp. Anyhow, she went. And she also borrowed Elizabeth's ivory comb with the

silver back, because its teeth are very wide apart, and therefore acceptable when it comes to getting out the tangles. Now, this especial comb is solely for ornament, and lies in state upon Elizabeth's dressing-table, with the brush beside it; they belong to a set brought her from Japan, and have associations which render them sacred, so I was astonished at Gabrielle's vandalism in proposing to desecrate it.

Just what really happened I don't know; I believe she got to dreaming out there in the sunshine, but this is what she said:

"I was sitting quietly reading when I heard a little thump, and there was that miserable comb balancing on the bottom step. Of course I went after it, and of course before I got there it toppled over and went through a crack of the slip into the water."

"That slip is hoodooed," interrupted Elizabeth. "Why don't you do as I do, and keep away from it?"

"It was low tide," continued Gabrielle, "and I could look through the crack and see

it lying on the sand beneath the water, so I took a stick and tried to poke it out. I got along very well by progressing from crack to crack, but at the critical moment I got excited and poked too hard, and it shot out just beyond my reach. That made me wild, for I knew I could n't face Elizabeth without it, so I simply lay down and grappled with my stick."

"Well?" I inquired, as she paused with a reminiscent chuckle.

"Well, as I was lying there with my face the color of a boiled lobster, fishing away for all I was worth, I heard a voice say: 'Allow me,' and there he was in a sail-boat, the picture of coolness and comfort. He rolled up his sleeve, though, and went to work, and finally got it, then calmly landed and introduced himself, saying something about having been unfortunate in his visits."

"Then was your opportunity to be dignified and squelching," I interrupted. "You should have frozen him with a glance."

"I tried to," she returned, "but all at once



" BUT ALL AT ONCE I REMEMBERED MY HAIR, AND WHO COULD BE
DIGNIFIED THEN?"

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I remembered my hair, and who could be dignified then?"

"So you brought him home with you as a reward of merit," laughed Elizabeth. "I shall never forget how you looked as you came up the veranda steps."

"Yes," said Gabrielle; "and you two sat and stared as though we had escaped from the zoo. Take your comb, Elizabeth; I never borrowed one before, and I never will again."

"I suppose," remarked Elizabeth, reflectively examining her recovered property, "we may be said to have *dropped* into his life: first your bag, then Elise's side-comb, and now this of mine. It's fate—we've got to know him, but it was n't so bad, after all, was it?"


Indeed, we had all enjoyed the afternoon. Even Gabrielle returned to the veranda, with her hair as high up on her head as she could get it and with her most impressive manner, but we none of us referred to our trip up on the steamer, and our visitor departed without once mentioning our property in his posses-

sion, although my side-combs were obviously not mates, which made me very uncomfortable.

Elizabeth asked him to come again, and when reproached for her cordiality said she did it only to please us, and quite expected to be bored to death herself; from which we knew she was very favorably impressed.

A sudden storm came up that afternoon, and when Mr. Bennett rose to go the sky was very black and lowering, and the ocean roared ominously, so he left his boat tied to our slip and went up into the village to do some errands and wait until it should be over. Instead of a short squall, however, it settled down into a heavy rain, with howling easterly wind and tossing, turbulent sea, so he was obliged to spend the night in the village, as, of course, he could not cross to his island in his small boat.

It was our first real storm in the cottage, and as we heard the boom of the waves and listened to the wind sweep about our little home until it sometimes trembled upon its



foundations, I must admit we were slightly nervous and could not settle to any occupation. So we gathered around our stone fireplace, lighted the driftwood Mary Anne had placed ready, and watched the wonderful green, lavender, scarlet, and blue of the crackling flames in silence.

Elizabeth sat on the rug and leaned her head against Gabrielle's knee, and their faces gradually assumed the dreamy, far-away expression which means they have withdrawn into their own inner world, where outsiders may not follow them, and where memory and anticipation are softened by mutual interest and mutual affection. But I did not care, for I also had a little inner world with memories, and liked to anticipate the future, now very hazy and indistinct, to be sure, but filled with delightful possibilities and alluring in its very vagueness.

So I leaned back in my low wicker chair and built castles in the air, while the rain beat unnoticed against the windows and the surf thundered angrily upon the shore.

"What's that?" cried Elizabeth sharply, and with one accord we sprang to our feet.

For above the noise of the storm we had heard a crash, as of metal striking metal, and the fall of a heavy body, apparently right beneath us.

"It's the storm," said Gabrielle. "Only the storm."

But she was white and trembling as she spoke, and cast an apprehensive glance at the floor, as though she expected it to open and engulf us.

"The cellar," whispered Elizabeth—"some one is down there."

Now, the cellar was a part of our abode we had not yet explored, so it had all the mystery of the unknown, and as we crept stealthily into the kitchen we experienced a sensation of standing over a bomb which might at any time explode and annihilate us. Gabrielle valiantly advanced to the door leading down into it, and opened it the fraction of an inch.

"Who is there?" she said, beginning bravely enough and ending with a quavering whisper.

Of course there was no reply, and we would have been frightened to death if there had been, yet we felt indignant at the stillness, as well as at the impenetrable darkness our eyes could not pierce. Gabrielle shut and locked the door.

“Shall we go down?” Her voice was rather tremulous, and she looked relieved when we shook our heads decidedly.

“If we only had a dog,” I hazarded, “we could put it down ahead of us and find out if any one was there; but we *have n’t*.”

“No,” agreed Elizabeth thoughtfully; “but we have Mary Anne.”

As though in response to her name, the outer kitchen door opened, and Mary Anne herself, wet, draggled, and breathless, stood before us.

Her usually ruddy face was pale, and her eyes rolled wildly as she looked from one to the other, while her shawl slipped unnoticed to the floor, and we saw that her gown was badly torn and her arm scratched and bleeding.

“You’ve been out?”

It was Elizabeth who spoke, and her voice brought Mary Anne’s wandering eye to a focus and held it a moment.

“Yes, miss.”

She picked up her shawl and folded it carefully, smoothing the creases with trembling hands.

“It’s a wild night, Miss Elizabeth,” she said, with a shudder. “The storm got into me blood, miss, and sleep I could n’t fur thinking of them I knows who are maybe out on the sea, so I got me shawl and started fur me brother’s ’ouse to see if ’e ’ad got ’ome safe and sound; but I could n’t git down the bluff, Miss Elise, the wind being that vi’lent it clean druv me back. And I stumbled, Miss Gabrielle, and ’urt meself ag’inst the side of the ’ouse, miss, as you kin see fur yerself. ’Ow, but it’s a night! God save them out on the wide water.”

Mary Anne paused for breath and looked curiously at us.

“But what are ye all in the kitchen fur?”



she inquired in a more natural way. "Is it afraid ye are, too, and come out 'ere to look fur me to keep ye comp'ny?"

We told her about our fright, and she promptly reassured us, saying she had locked everything securely early in the evening, but would go down and investigate.

"I'll go with you and hold the light," I volunteered; but Mary Anne declined my society more firmly than politely.

"And what good would you be, Miss Elise—jumpin' at yer shadder and drippin' candle grease over me clean floor? No, thank ye kindly, I'll go alone; full well I know there's nothin' bigger than a rat down there."

It was very pleasant to hear her moving about, and when she called up to us with a laugh that the hanging shelf had fallen, coming down upon the coal shovel and scuttle, we laughed also, and felt a weight lifted from our hearts.


"Them ropes was rotten," announced Mary Anne, laboriously ascending the stairs, "and it's a mercy I didn't set the cream there

to raise as usual, which, praise be given, I did n't. Don't you worry no more, but go to bed, and I'll make some chocolate to warm you like, for it's very comfortin' to the innerds on a night like this."

It was acceptable advice, and we gladly followed it, but as we left the kitchen I chanced to glance back and saw Mary Anne at the cellar door, her head bent and her whole bearing tense and alert—much the attitude of a dog who waits an expected command in its master's voice.

Yet when she appeared up-stairs a little later, carrying a tray with three cups of steaming chocolate, and filled with motherly solicitude as to our comfort, she was merely a respectable, middle-aged servant, whose opinions one would receive with due respect. She had rearranged her dress, and her manner was quite natural and composed as she drew aside the curtain and looked into the night, with a comment on its wildness.

We joined her at the window, and as we stood looking out a beam of light pierced the



enveloping darkness, casting a broad path across the black water, and we could see a little boat making its way around the point of the island—now riding the waves gallantly, now tipped so far to one side it seemed certain to capsize.

“Our friend the searchlight,” remarked Gabrielle, in the tone of one who welcomes an old acquaintance, but a smothered sound as the little boat careened dangerously caused me to glance curiously at Mary Anne.

She was leaning against the window frame, and was evidently in pain, for her face was livid and her breath came in short gasps.

“It’s nothing, Miss Elise,” she muttered, as she caught my eye. “The dyspepsy catches me around the ’eart now and then. And to think of some mother’s son in that little cockle-shell to-night! Come, now, get into bed and drink yer chocolate while it’s ’ot.”

“I think,” remarked Elizabeth, as she sipped appreciatively, “that Mr. Bennett’s boat will be beaten to pieces against our slip to-night. I wish we could get into the boat-

house for such emergencies. You must make your brother get us a key, Mary Anne."

"Yes, miss," said Mary Anne quietly.

I tried to say something, but found myself suddenly too sleepy to articulate, and saw Mary Anne retreat with the empty cups as though through a veil.

I slept heavily that night, and dreamed that Gordon Bennett made a boat-house of our cellar in spite of our remonstrances to the contrary. I also had a curiously vivid impression of Mary Anne and a candle passing and repassing my door, but when I tried to call out and ask her what she wanted I could make no sound, and could only struggle with the oppressed, smothering sensation which Elizabeth said always accompanied nightmare. I was willing to take her word for it, never having experienced it myself, but I did not like it, and mentally resolved to drink no more chocolate at night, if it produced such unwelcome after-effects.



CHAPTER VI

It was a very beautiful world which greeted us the morning after the storm, all swept and garnished and freshly painted for our delectation.

I wish I could describe it, as we stood upon our veranda drinking in the life-giving ozone and feasting our eyes upon the landscape. Perhaps if I were an artist I could better express the bright azure of the sky, the deeper blue of the sparkling ocean rippling with white-capped waves, the wonderful clearness of the atmosphere, and the glorious sunlight gilding everything until the commonest objects were endowed with a charm hitherto unsuspected.

I had wakened tired and unrefreshed, and both Gabrielle and Elizabeth looked rather pale and heavy-eyed, so we decided to spend the day at home, and established ourselves upon the veranda for one of the long, lazy mornings in which we frequently indulged.

Lady Edith Cambell soon joined us, fresh and dainty in her pretty morning costume and simple hat, and we greeted her with enthusiasm.

"Wilfred has gone fishing," she remarked, as she removed her hat, "and as he means to be away all day, I shall not be missed. How very cozy you all look, and what a wonderful morning, is it not?"

"If storms bring days like this," remarked Gabrielle, from the hammock, "I shall not care how often they come."

"Oh, shall you not?" replied Lady Edith, with a little shiver. "I do not believe I agree with you. Last night was terrible even in the village; what it must have been in this exposed place I cannot imagine. I am always afraid of the wind, and then, too——"

She paused uncertainly and looked at us.

"Such a dreadful thing happened! Do you care to hear hotel gossip?"

We hastened to assure her that we loved all gossip, hotel or otherwise, and she resumed.

"Well, last night Mrs. Bundy, the fat old

lady who had the table next to ours, you know——”

“Who wore a diamond sunburst on her forefinger and headlights in her ears,” interrupted Gabrielle.

“And came to breakfast in a velvet tea-gown, with an emerald necklace,” supplemented Elizabeth. “Of course we remember her. Did she die of apoplexy or anything?”

“She was robbed,” said Lady Edith gravely. “All her jewels were taken, and they were very valuable. Poor old woman! Was it not dreadful? She is in a state of hysterical collapse this morning, and who can wonder?”

“Robbed!” I exclaimed incredulously.

“Yes, robbed. It makes one very uncomfortable, does it not? They say it is the work of an expert, and have put the matter into the hands of the police, hoping to recover the jewels.”

“Whom do they suspect?”


“I do not know;” she hesitated a moment, then resumed quietly: “You see, the hotel

was crowded last night with strangers storm-bound on the island, and it will be difficult to form an opinion. Mrs. Bundy was alarmed at the storm, and spent most of the night in her daughter's room. It is probable the thief got in then, or when she was at dinner."

"But," objected Elizabeth, "it must have been some one who knew she had them. It could not have been a stranger."

"One can never tell," said Lady Edith thoughtfully. "But I confess it has made me nervous. I did not bring many jewels, fortunately, but I have my mother's pearls and a few other trinkets I would not care to lose, and I do not know what to do with them, since it appears unsafe to trust things in one's room, even if they are securely put away. Mrs. Bundy insisted that she locked up her emeralds with her own hands, and had the key on a ribbon around her neck."

"I am glad we left when we did," I remarked as she paused. "Not that I am burdened with jewels, but it must be awfully unpleasant."



"It is," she agreed; "one is inclined to look suspiciously at one's neighbors, not to mention servants. As for me, I have put my treasures in this box and carried it with me everywhere this morning. I would not even trust my maid, who has been with me for years. I do not know what in the world to do with them, and am more than half inclined to dig a hole and bury them deep and safe."

She gave a vexed little laugh as she spoke, and raised a box wrapped in white paper which she held on her lap, and which had appeared to contain bonbons.

"I'll tell you," said Elizabeth impulsively. "Leave them here. There is a little iron safe under the china closet in the dining-room. I can't imagine why it was put there, for it is not big enough to hold much silver, even if we had anything but the most obvious plate; but it possesses two padlocks, and you could lock it and keep the keys."

"Do you really mean it?" said Lady Edith incredulously.

"Yes—why not? I'm sure we won't be

pursued for our valuables, and, if you will take all responsibility for leaving them, you are more than welcome to the exclusive use of the safe—is n't she, girls?"

Of course we agreed willingly, and were quite repaid by the look of relief in her big brown eyes and the pretty, eager manner with which she endeavored to express her gratitude.

"Let us put them away at once and get them off our minds," suggested Gabrielle, springing from the hammock and leading the way to the dining-room.

So we opened the door—which looked like an ordinary wooden panel below the corner closet—and disclosed the little iron safe with its two padlocks—both so rusty from disuse that it took all the strength I possessed to turn the keys.

"There!" I remarked, handing them to Lady Edith and closing the outer wooden door. "Now you can rest in peace."

"You have removed an incubus from my shoulders," she said, with a quick display of

dimples, "and I am more grateful than I can express. I should not have had an easy minute after Mrs. Bundy's experience, although I am inclined to believe it was one of the strange men who spent the night here, rather than a guest or servant of the hotel. I would *rather* think so.

"And do you know," she continued thoughtfully, "my maid says that several of these men left very early, without waiting for breakfast—as soon as it was light, in fact. That in itself seems suspicious, under the circumstances, but then, as I said, every one is inclined to suspect every one else, and it is all very horrid and uncomfortable. Now, do let us go outside again, and not waste this glorious day."


We had a delightful morning, for our guest was even more charming than usual. There was a subdued exhilaration in her manner, and an exuberance of spirit we had never seen before; her cheeks were softly pink, and her eyes shone, as she chatted merrily of various things after the fashion of girls the world

over. In her softened mood, with the *grande dame* manner laid aside, she was quite irresistible, and I found myself wondering why her left hand bore neither wedding nor engagement ring, and whether she as well as her brother had an unhappy romance to be lived down and forgotten.

She did not, however, convey the impression of a lovelorn damsel, for a more radiant creature I have never seen. By the time lunch was over we felt as though we had known her always, and were planning a summer abroad, part of which was to be spent at her father's castle in Scotland.

"I hope," she added, "that Wilfrid will have quite recovered his poise before you come over, and you can see him as he really is—such a dear fellow! And then, who knows what might happen? One of you might be induced to stay in the old world, for we have many friends, and American girls are very popular, you know."

After lunch Elizabeth declared her intention of going down the cellar to see what it



was like, saying that it made her very uncomfortable not to know what she lived over; but she returned immediately, with a most disgusted expression.

"Mary Anne is scrubbing," she announced, "and the whole place is as wet as the ocean. I'll have to wait until to-morrow. Just now I would need a boat."

"What's the use of bothering?" inquired Gabrielle placidly. "It would not worry me if I never explored the cellar. Just so I know it's there, I don't care what it looks like."

"Well, I *do*," returned Elizabeth, "and I'm going down there the first thing in the morning, if I don't forget it."

"Suppose we walk down to the wharf in the village," suggested Lady Edith, "and meet Wilfrid. We might induce him to take us for a sail."

But I still felt very indolent and preferred the hammock, with its many pillows and cool breeze, to the long, hot walk to the village, so the other three started cheerfully off, leaving me to my own devices.

For a while I swung idly to and fro, watching the dancing water and admiring the effect of the sunlight on the occasional sail which ventured around the point from the island colony on the other side. I was thinking in a desultory way of poor Mrs. Bundy and her lost emeralds, and of Lady Edith and her mother's pearls, and wishing she had opened the box and shown them to us before locking them away, when I heard a step upon the gravel path, and Gordon Bennett lifted his cap and smiled amicably upon me, as though he were quite in the habit of paying us daily visits.

I noticed then what white teeth he had, and how he smiled with his eyes as well as his lips, but this is an unimportant digression.

"I apologize for coming so often," he remarked, appropriating a comfortable chair. "My excuse is that I wish to return your property. I forgot it yesterday."

He drew Gabrielle's bag from his pocket as he spoke, and regarded it affectionately.

"At least," he continued, "I suppose it

belongs to one of you; I found it on the steamer coming up, you know, just where you had been sitting."

I acknowledged our ownership of the property, and extended my hand for it, but he held it thoughtfully, as though unwilling to relinquish it.

"Would you mind," he said at last, with some hesitation, "telling me why when I started to bring you this bag, that night on the steamer, you all turned and fled as though I had been a carnivorous animal?"

There was a twinkle in his eye which made me hotly resentful, although I tried to preserve a cool and indifferent manner.

"Would you really like to know?"

"Pining to be told; I have lost valuable sleep trying to work it out."

"Well, we thought you were crazy."

"Why, please."

His voice was genuinely astonished, and I plunged at once into an explanation I hoped would be satisfactory.

"You see, it was those chairs you threw

overboard. It was such an extraordinary thing to do. And Gabrielle said you muttered when you did it."

"Is that all?"—relief and amusement struggled for supremacy in his voice, and I felt myself flushing uncomfortably.

"I think it's quite enough," I returned irritably. "No men in their senses go around throwing chairs overboard."

"And is that why I got the cold shoulder when I called?"

"Of course."

Mr. Gordon Bennett laughed then as he has never dared laugh since when referring to that subject, for we don't like to talk about it, as it makes us appear rather foolish.

"I am glad it amuses you," I remarked, in my most frigid manner, which I have been told is extremely chilling.

"Oh, I say," he said quickly, "don't look at it that way. Why, it was nothing, after all. I had made two trips on that old boat this summer, and one of those dilapidated chairs broke down with me and nearly pitched

me overboard. I complained, but the company would not get new ones, which put my back up a bit, so I got into the habit of examining them, and when I found one weak in the back or legs I just pitched it overboard. That was n't so bad, was it? Of course I never thought how it looked, and I *did* 'mutter,' but I'm heartily glad you did not hear what I said."

It was a very simple explanation—so simple, in fact, that I felt provoked it had not occurred to me, and I hated to think how he would relate the incident to his friend Mr. Blake, and how they would laugh over it. So I merely looked out at the ocean and made a frosty, impersonal remark about the view.

But instead of the familiar landscape I found myself looking straight into two very blue eyes with a trace of anxiety in them, and a sunburned hand was extended toward me appealingly.

"Let's shake and be friends," he said heartily. "I'm sorry I alarmed you, but I'm glad I found out my offense. I was deter-

mined I would know what it was. When the general wrote me his daughter was here, and I discovered who it was, I was delighted, for of course I saw you all on the boat, and I wanted awfully to know you. You don't mind my saying so? Then when I got snubbed so unmercifully I could not understand it. Shall we start all over again, and will you explain to your friends that I am in possession of all my senses and hope to keep them a while longer?"

Well, it was impossible not to smile also, and indeed I was very glad of a chance to descend gracefully from my high horse, so we shook hands gravely and started all over again, as he had suggested.

I inquired where he spent the night, and he mentioned the hotel we had deserted, so I told him about the robbery. He had heard nothing, having left very early in the morning, meaning to sail home in time for breakfast.

I asked him if his boat suffered any ill effects from the storm, and his manner grew all at once constrained and ill at ease, so I

changed the subject, fearing that it might have been irrevocably damaged against our slip, and feeling somewhat responsible. I spoke of the cottage, and how we enjoyed life here, and the contrast it was to the hotel.

"Yes," he said absently; "it's a jolly little place. But, tell me, how did you hear of it, and how did you manage to get it? I understood it was not for rent."

I told him he was mistaken; that we had no trouble at all in securing it, and that the rent was ridiculously low, all things considered.

"I would like to know to whom it belongs," I remarked. "I understand it was some woman's whim, and she has tired of it. Perhaps we might get some of our relatives to buy it and come here every summer."

"Don't you know anything about it?"—he was looking at me curiously now.

"Not a thing," I said lightly; "do you?"

A dull red flush was distinctly visible beneath his coat of tan as he replied to my question.

"I'm not a native, you know. I was here

for a bit last year, and I liked it; so when I had a chance to buy an island, house and all, I jumped at it. But I'm not wise about my neighbors. I do know that this cottage was occupied last summer, and I heard the people were very unsocial and never received a guest or entered the village while they were here; and, of course, there were stories. Gossip flourishes on a mystery, you know."

"Well," I returned, "I don't care how mysterious the former tenants were, but I'm glad they did not come back. Perhaps they were in mourning, or invalids, or something of that sort."

"No doubt," he agreed hastily; "no doubt."

And then we changed the subject and talked of other things till the sound of voices and laughter told me Elizabeth and Gabrielle were returning from the village. They brought Lady Edith and Lord Wilfrid both home with them to dinner, and it was not difficult to persuade Mr. Bennett to stay also, so we had the first of some very merry repasts, where

morning costumes were allowed, and where Mary Anne, to quote her own words, "dished up hanythink that came 'andy and prayed the Lord it would be enough."

That night I asked Gabrielle to look in her bag and give me my side-comb; but she found that it was not there, and that our picture also was missing.

"We will ask for it the next time we see him," remarked Elizabeth. "I don't think it is very nice in him to have taken it out."

"Oh, no," I objected; "don't say anything about it. I don't want to give him the satisfaction of knowing we missed it."

And we all agreed that this was our most dignified course.

CHAPTER VII

ELIZABETH inspected the cellar next morning, and I went with her, by request.

“Not that I’m afraid,” she explained elaborately; “but it is always nicer to have some one to speak to, and, besides one of you, at least, ought to take an interest in such things.”

It looked very much like other cellars, with paved floor, coal bins, and so on, except that it ran far back, forming a sort of alleyway, which was very dark and unprepossessing and seemed to be a repository for old boxes, bits of paper, kindling wood, and the usual accumulated trash of a household. At the extreme end an empty packing case large enough to have contained a piano rested against the wall, which looked and smelled very damp and mouldy.

Elizabeth glanced about and curled her lip contemptuously; the zeal of the born housekeeper shone in her eye, and I knew she had

visions of nicely whitewashed walls, with eminently proper receptacles for kindling and waste paper, and foresaw trouble ahead for Mary Anne.

We could hear the ocean outside, for the cellar was an excavation in the bluff, and it conveyed such an unpleasant impression of a vault-like cave that I was not sorry when Elizabeth proposed an adjournment.

“And here is the hanging shelf,” I remarked, as I almost ran into it. “Mary Anne has lost no time in putting it up again—on chains this time, so I hope it is safe.”

“How rusty they are!” said Elizabeth, pausing to examine them. “They look as though they had been here for years, but I suppose they are old ones she found somewhere. This place must be well aired; it is awfully musty.”

She gathered up her skirts as she spoke, preparatory to going up the steps, and I was about to follow when something caught my eye, and mechanically I stooped and picked it up from a crack between two bricks.

"Have you lost anything?" called Elizabeth from the stairs.

"No," I replied; "I have found something. Look here."

Together we examined my discovery as it lay in the palm of my hand—a man's cuff link of dull, raised gold, the head of the Sphinx on one side and the under link shaped like a small key.

Elizabeth turned it over curiously.

"It must have belonged to the people who were here last year," she conjectured. "It's very pretty, isn't it? I never saw one anything like it."

"Look, Mary Anne!" I exclaimed, as we entered the kitchen. "See what I have found."

Mary Anne advanced willingly, but as I raised the button by the little key and held it toward her, her jaw dropped suddenly and the color forsook her ruddy face.

"Where'd you find it, miss?"

"In the cellar, right by the steps."

"You've—been—down in the cellar?"

“Certainly; why not?”

Mary Anne wiped her face with a corner of her gingham apron, and poked wood into the stove with reckless prodigality.

“It’s entirely too fore’anded you are, Miss Elizabeth,” she grumbled—“the cellar look-in’ like distraction and you goin’ down there the fust time! What kind of ’ousekeepin’ do you think I do? This very day I laid out to put everything shipshape down there and take you around meself. And the cellar’s damp-like, and no place fur a lady any’ow, and you like to take cold and sneeze yer ’ead off!”

Elizabeth laughed and assured her that this catastrophe was not liable to happen to-day, and suggested that the cellar might be improved by the introduction of fresh air and sunlight.

“And how soon you got the shelf fixed!” she added, by way of soothing Mary Anne’s ruffled feelings.

“Shelf?” she repeated vaguely. “Oh, of course, miss. ’Ow could I git along without

it? And what else did ye find in the cellar, Miss Elise besides the little button?"

I thought she watched me keenly as I replied I had not looked for anything more, and wondered she had not seen it on her trips up and down the steps.

"Me eyes are not so good as they once were, nor so bright as yours, Miss Elise," she remarked. "It's a pretty thing, now is n't it? What will you be doin' with it?"

But I did not reply, for Gabrielle, who had been to the village for the mail, now appeared, and Elizabeth immediately lost interest in everything else.

I do not wish to arouse false suspicions, but Elizabeth certainly wrote a great many very long letters, and received volumes all in the same handwriting, which always arrived on certain days of the week. She used to open them with an air of indifference and glance over them carelessly, then in a few minutes she would make some excuse to go off alone, and we could sometimes see her poring over them, dead to the world as she turned page

after page, and smiling a smile which exasperated Gabrielle exceedingly, although she also did not a little corresponding on her own account that summer.

To-day, however, she handed Elizabeth her letter without comment, and only glanced casually at the cuff link when I displayed it in triumph, for she was eager to relate the news she had accumulated during her trip to the village.

"You know that smuggler?" she began, seating herself on the kitchen doorstep and removing her hat.

"No," I interrupted; "I'm happy to say I *don't* know him."

"You know *about* him, don't you? It's all the same thing. Well, I've been to the hotel, and I heard that he is suspected of having been on the island the night of the storm, and they think"—she dropped her voice cautiously—"they think he took Mrs. Bundy's emeralds."

"Who thinks so?"


"Oh, the detectives, of course. Lady Edith

told me. And they say it was a very foolish thing for him to do, because he can now be arrested in Canada. And our government officials are perfectly wild, too, for a whole lot of things were smuggled in somehow right under their noses."

"Is he on the island now?"

"Oh, no. As Lord Wilfrid said, it would be madness for him to stay here now. He must have been one of the men who left the hotel so early that morning—before Mrs. Bundy discovered her loss. They are following them up, of course, but it was easy enough to register a false name and address. I can forgive his smuggling, but I can't forgive his robbing that poor old woman—she's just scared to death, and expects to have her throat cut every night, they say—so I hope they will catch him."

"Don't be 'opin' that, Miss Gabrielle;" it was Mary Anne who spoke, and she stood listening to the story with dish-cloth in one hand and plate in the other. "Don't be 'opin' that. Remember the mother what bore 'im,



and them that loves 'im, be 'e what 'e may."

"Well," said Gabrielle, "his mother should have brought him up better, that's all I've got to say about it; and I *do* hope he'll be caught and punished. Give us something good for lunch, won't you, Mary Anne? I'm starving.

"And, Elise," she continued, "I made an engagement for us all to go sailing this afternoon with the Campbells. And do you know—I almost forgot to tell you—the guests at the hotel had to submit to having their trunks searched. I think it was insulting, but Lady Edith said she thought it only right."

"But, Gabrielle," said Elizabeth, tucking her letter inside her shirt-waist, to be brought forth in private later, "you forget I told Mr. Bennett he could bring his friend Mr. Blake this afternoon. I meant to have tea on the veranda."

"So you did. Well, we can all come home about four o'clock."

"And I'll be ready fur you," promised Mary Anne eagerly. "Don't you fash yer-

self, Miss Elizabeth ; I'll have everything laid out and ready, and I'll make you some nice little cakes, too, and 'ave them 'ot and ready, fur well I know you'll all be 'ungry.'

So when Lord Wilfrid sailed to our little slip that afternoon he found us waiting for him and quite prepared for a good time. There was a nice breeze, and the sea was not too rough, so we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and made a tour among the neighboring islands, admiring the handsome residences with which they seemed to abound.

"But I would just as lieve have our cottage on the bluff as any of them," declared Elizabeth contentedly, and we all agreed with her.

We sailed so near the American shore that we could distinguish the signs on the wharf of the little town where the boat landed, and Gabrielle proposed going ashore and looking around a little. Lord Wilfried busied himself with his sail for a moment, then turned and looked steadily at his sister.

"Shall we land, Edith?" he said. "The

wind is dead against us, and it will take some time to tack back home again, but of course, if you think best, I am quite willing."

"Oh, I hardly think it would be wise, dear," she replied. "The girls have an engagement, you know. Some other time."

So we sailed home again, speculating as to which island Gordon Bennett owned, until we saw that gentleman himself embarking with his friend in an immaculate little launch, glistening with white paint and absolutely spotless in every respect. We learned later on that the islanders are quite as particular about the appearance of their boats as are the cottagers at Bar Harbor about their equipages, and that there is among them a friendly rivalry on the subject. We hailed him merrily and challenged him to race us home, and in spite of Lord Wilfrid's statement about the wind the boat cut through the water at a good pace. The salt spray dashed up in our faces and our hair blew into our eyes, but we did not care, for we reached the slip a full minute before Mr. Bennett, and

could exult over his defeat even while obliged to admire his boat.

"But this is not the boat you left at the slip the day it stormed," remarked Gabrielle; "this is much newer—yes, and much prettier, but I believe the other is faster. When you race with us you must always take your swiftest boat, you know."

"But I can't race that boat, unfortunately," he returned, with a short laugh. "When I came to get it that morning it had vanished entirely—broken away, I suppose—and I had to go home in a fishing smack I happened to be able to hire. I think it is very inhospitable of you to keep your boat-house door locked."

"I think so, too," agreed Elizabeth, "and if I can ever remember it I am going to get a locksmith from the village and have it opened."

We were all ready to do justice to the nice hot cakes and tea Mary Anne had waiting for us, and we found Mr. Blake quite an acquisition. He was a quiet man, who, as Gabrielle said, always seemed to be about to make a



brilliant remark and never did, but kept us on the alert waiting for it.

Lady Edith took off her hat and laid it on the chair beside her, and I idly picked it up, smoothing out the veil which was knotted around it and thinking how wonderfully well it suited her flower-like face. Suddenly I paused, however, for in the veil fastening the chiffon to the hat brim, I saw a small gold pin shaped like a key, and the counterpart of one link of my cuff button.

I was about to draw it out and ask her about it, for the design was unusual, when I saw a gray shadow cross her face and her eyes dilate strangely. She was looking beyond me, straight at Gordon Bennett, and I looked also, wondering greatly.

He was bending forward, cup in hand, talking to Gabrielle, and a ray from the setting sun reached the spoon, causing it to gleam as he moved it and insensibly attract the eye. Something else gleamed also from his white cravat, and I saw that his scarf-pin was the head of the Sphinx in raised dull gold.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHAT I like best about Mary Anne," remarked Elizabeth appreciatively, "is that she is so *dependable*."

We were standing at my window, watching Mary Anne and a market basket disappear in the direction of the village. We regarded her broad back and deliberate movements with genuine affection, knowing that her foraging would be eminently successful and our larder satisfactorily stocked, which desirable result was not by any means certain to follow when we ourselves went to market.

Gabrielle and Elizabeth had their hats on and even carried gloves, which meant that something unusual was about to happen.

"If we had not made such a definite engagement with the Campbells, I would not go one step," announced Gabrielle. "I don't like to leave you alone with a headache."

"Of course you must go," I returned ruefully. "We have set too many times and been

disappointed to put it off again. Then, too, remember Lord Wilfrid is to meet you over there at luncheon, and as he must have already started, there is no way of letting him know. I will be all right when you come home, but it is too bad."

For this was the day agreed upon, after various disappointments, for a shopping expedition to the small town across the water. We intended to take advantage of the little steamer that crossed every morning and returned every afternoon, explore the place, and invest in a few articles the village could not supply. Lady Edith Campbell and her brother were to join us, and we anticipated a very jolly time.


I was therefore awfully disappointed when I wakened that morning with the dull pain in my eyeballs I have reason to respect and treat with every deference. While the girls made their toilets, protesting vigorously against leaving me alone, I rested my heavy head against the window frame and tried to calculate how long it would probably be before my

brain felt clear again and life would seem worth living.

“It is the kindest thing you can do for me,” I said at last. “I prefer to be alone when my head aches. When you get off I will take something and lie down, and Mary Anne will make me some tea for lunch. By the time you come home tired and rather cross, I shall be all freshly dressed and as cool and comfortable as possible. Now, if you don’t start, you will miss your boat.”

They finally set out, and I watched them walk down the path toward the village. Both were tall and slender, but there the resemblance ceased entirely. Gabrielle was strictly tailor-made from shoe to hat, but Elizabeth inclined toward softening the severity of such costumes by various feminine devices very telling in their effect, especially upon the masculine element of society.

When Gabrielle turned and waved her tightly-rolled silk umbrella in a farewell salute, I thought her plain, well-fitting skirt and jacket, immaculately severe linen shirt-



waist, stiff cravat, and trim little hat with its knot of ribbon and long black quill, the only correct costume for any one. But when Elizabeth also turned and raised her red parasol I was not so sure, for the pretty tan-colored skirt and short Eton jacket, the dainty white blouse, and the light straw hat with a red rose under the brim, were certainly very becoming, as well as entirely suitable.

I lay quite still for some hours, then found myself gradually reviving and with a strong desire for a cup of tea. The house seemed very quiet, and though I opened my door and called several times there was no response. I was forced to conclude that Mary Anne had taken advantage of our intended absence to spend the day in the village, not knowing I had remained at home.

I therefore got up and went down to the kitchen, to see what I could find; for I had eaten no breakfast, and felt that I would now be all the better for a little food.


The fire was out, and the prospects discouraging to one disinclined to make much of an

effort; but I found some crackers, and remembered that Mary Anne had mentioned putting the milk on the hanging shelf in the cellar, so I got a glass and went after it, cracker jar in hand.

The cellar had been well aired and was much less damp and musty than on my previous visit. Also, the litter of boxes and other rubbish had been neatly piled along the wall, and the whole place seemed more habitable. The sea breeze swept through the open windows until the hanging shelf creaked on its rusty chains, and a ray of sunlight penetrated the dark recess, almost reaching the packing case at the end.

I found the milk and filled my glass, then wandered aimlessly into the recess, sat down upon an upturned box, and began my lunch. I do not understand why I should have elected to do this, when the entire house was at my disposal, but sometimes one obeys an impulse without any tangible reason for doing so.

As I sat contentedly nibbling a cracker and sipping the milk I heard voices, muffled but



quite distinct, as though on the other side of a thin partition. At first I was alarmed, but in an instant I recognized Mary Anne's familiar tones and was correspondingly relieved, although her whereabouts was still a mystery.

"Now, then," said a man's voice impatiently, "don't let's have a scene, and, for heaven's sake, don't turn on the water-works—this place is damp enough already."

"Oh, Willy, my dear, dear boy," she said appealingly; "don't go for to be short wi' me—don't, now!"

There was silence for a minute, and then the man spoke again.

"I tell you there's no use talking any more. I've begun the thing, and I'm going through with it."

"But the danger, Willy, the danger!"

"I'm used to danger."

"Aye, worse luck, that you are! And me like to break me 'eart wi' thinkin' of you o' nights."

"Then don't think."

"Ah, 'ow can I 'elp it? Me that carried you in me arms when you was a little babby!"

"Well, now, will you do what I ask, or won't you?"

"Don't ask it of me, Willy—don't now."

"I do ask it."


I forgot all honorable scruples against eavesdropping, and listened with all my ears. I can only add in self defense that I believe any one else in my place would have done the same.

He muttered something I could not hear, however, and Mary Anne gave a stifled sob.

"Oh, you did n't use to be so 'ard!" she exclaimed. "It's *she* 'as changed you. It's 'er fault—with 'er soft 'ands and 'er 'ard, crool 'eart!"

"Don't you say anything against Nell. I won't have it."

"Oh, it's allus Nell nowadays. And what does she care what 'appens to you, so long as she's safe 'erself? If only you'd took to the fishing trade, Willy, and lived respectable 'ow 'appy we might 'ave been, and



Sarah Cushley ready to marry you if you'd said the word."

"Sarah Cushley indeed!"

"It's the books—that's what done it. Many's the time I've been sorry I ever let you go to school. Many's the time I've wished I'd listened to yer uncle when 'e wanted to take you on 'is sloop afore the mast. Fur 'e said good 'ard work, with a rope's end now and then, would make a man o' you. But you'd a look o' yer father, and you 'ad 'is fine ways——"

He interrupted her with an unpleasant laugh.

"Fine ways indeed! That's all he ever gave his son. Don't blame me for anything, mother—look nearer home. I'm not saying it was all your fault. You thought you were married."

"God knows I did, Willy!"

"You brought me into the world, and found you were deceived, like many another fool of a girl—and serves them right, too, for thinking a gentleman would marry them."

“Oh, my boy!”


There was real tragedy in the exclamation, and I found myself wiping away a tear, but the man’s voice was as cold as ever.

“So I started life under a handicap—a thoroughbred mongrel, made up of the worst of you and the worst of him. And I turned out a bad lot, did n’t I? But whose fault was it?”

“Mine, Willy, mine.”

“Yes, yours. Branded from the beginning with the bar sinister—different from other children. Don’t I remember it all? Growing up with *his* aristocratic tastes and *your* environment; born with the instincts of his class, which make luxuries necessities, and no money to gratify them. And then the cold shoulder everywhere—contemptuous pity from his class, open ridicule from yours.”

“I sent you away, Willy. I took the bit of money he gave me and sent you to the States to school, where you could be a gentleman and no questions asked. And I loved you, darlin’; I allus loved you.”



“You gave me what you could, I suppose. I’m not blaming you for that. But you turned me loose with a little learning and no money—a dangerous combination, mother. So I went to the bad, preferring a short life and a merry one. Then I met Nell, and was happy, for she loved me. Don’t say she did n’t—she did, I tell you; she *does*.”

“And so do I, my boy. Who could love you like your mother?”

“Then, mother, do as I tell you, without any more fuss. Come away from this place—it gets on my nerves—and give me something to drink, for I was up all night, and have more work ahead of me.”

Their voices died away, and I sat for some time longer meditating upon what I had heard, and, if the truth must be told, afraid to emerge from the cellar while the man was on the premises. At last a sound in the kitchen indicated that Mary Anne had returned alone, so I went boldly up the outside steps and around to the kitchen door.

She sat on a chair near the table, her apron

thrown over her head, the picture of despair, and I advanced quietly and laid my hand upon her shoulder, for my heart ached for the poor soul.

“Mary Anne,” I said very gently, “I was in the cellar just now, and heard you talking.”

She stared at me with widely distended eyes and trembling lips.

“Miss Elise!” she gasped. “You here?”

“I did n’t go with the others, because my head ached. You have not been honest with us, Mary Anne. We did n’t know you had a son.”

She rested her head in her hands and burst into tears.

“Oh, Miss Elise,” she sobbed, “don’t look at me that way—I’m un’appy enough without that. Yes, miss, I ’ave a son, and if you ’eard us talkin’, you know all about it. He took to drink, miss, and was allus in trouble. And last year ’e got to quarrelling—in Montreal it was—and ’e stabbed a man. And the man up and died. So they’re after ’im fur it, and

they'll 'ang 'im, miss, they'll 'ang my boy if they ketches 'im."

She rocked to and fro a moment in speechless misery, and then continued:

"And I give 'im money, Miss Elise, but I don't let 'im come up 'ere, except to-day 'e follered me unbeknownst, miss, and I let 'im go in the coal 'ole, God furgive me fur the liberty I took! Mostly 'e comes down the shore in 'is boat, and I meets 'im quite private. But I've give 'im all the money I 'ad, and my brother's give him money, too, and 'e's goin' back to the old country to live a decent life."

"Where were you when I heard you talking?"

"In the coal 'ole at the back o' the cellar. And I beg your parding fur the liberty I took, but don't lay it up agin me, miss, fur what else could a mother do? And, Miss Elise, darlin', you'll keep a quiet tongue in yer 'ead, won't you, and let 'im git away? Fur 'e's shipped as a sailor and sails on Sunday mornin'."

I said I would talk it over with the others,

but I thought if she promised never to allow him near the house again we would say nothing, as he was really going to leave the country and reform. She quite cheered up then, and insisted on getting me a lunch, waiting on me with a humility and alacrity I found most touching. This vagrant son explained various little mysteries about Mary Anne which had puzzled me a good deal, and I felt very sorry, indeed, for the poor creature with her secret trouble.

I had been so excited that I quite forgot my own ills, and longed for the return of the girls, that I might talk the matter over with them. They could not get home before six o'clock, however, so I went out on the veranda to wait for them and enjoy the salt breeze.

To my surprise, I found Lady Edith Campbell reclining in the hammock, reading the morning paper. She laughed as I exclaimed in astonishment, and came to meet me with a kiss of welcome.

"You did not expect me," she said, "and I certainly did not expect to be here, but I woke

with such a wretched headache this morning I simply could not go."

"Why, so did I."

"I know—Gabrielle told me. They wanted to put it off again, but Wilfrid had already gone, and I knew he would be disappointed, so I persuaded them to go. About noon my head got better, and my room felt so close and stuffy I longed for your cool breeze and lovely view, so I managed to dress and walk up here, thinking we might compare symptoms. I rang, but no one came, so I appropriated the hammock, as my walk had used me up completely. I hope you don't mind very much."

I hastened to assure her I was delighted, as I had had more than enough of my own society. So we had a long, comfortable afternoon, and by and by Mary Anne brought us tea, with an appealing glance at me which I interpreted as a plea for silence, and I am glad to be able to say I kept her secret inviolate.

"I envy you your complexion," I remarked, as I admired the seashell tints of my guest's

face. "Now, I am quite pale and heavy-eyed, but you look as fresh as a daisy, yet you have had just as horrid a day as I."


"It takes a great deal to make the Campbells lose their color," she replied, "or, rather, to make it *stay* lost. I was pale enough this morning, but as soon as the pain left me, the red returned. I am shockingly healthy, you know—good, sturdy old Scotch blood."

"But Lord Wilfrid often looks very pale."

"Oh, Wilfrid is an alien—we all tell him so, much to his disgust; and he is far from well, poor fellow, although I think he is improving. Have you noticed that he seems brighter and better of late?"

I made an appropriate reply, and the conversation drifted to other things. As we sat together in the hammock, swaying gently to and fro, I happened to notice that in the lace at her throat she wore the little gold key which had excited my curiosity once before.

I spoke of it, and she at once drew it out and handed it to me, while I told her the story of the cuff button and its unusual design.



“And,” I concluded, “your pin surprised me, and so did Mr. Bennett’s, but please tell me why you were interested in it.”

Her sweet face grew very grave, and she hesitated a moment before replying, then took the pin from me and held it in her hand.

“Elise,” she said slowly, “this little pin was given me by one I loved very dearly, and whom I have lost.”

“By death?”

“No, not death; there are worse things—far worse.”

I thought of Mary Anne, and wondered if she would not endorse this sentiment.

“I kept the little gold key,” she continued, touching it lovingly. “It was the *only* thing I kept, but I could not give it up. And he—but why should I burden you with my trouble? It is all past and over, and I never refer to it.”

“Some day,” I hazarded, “you will marry and be happy.”

“I am happy now,” she returned; “or, rather, I make myself believe it. But I shall


not marry, for I have but one heart, and this is its key. I should like to see your button some time when it is convenient, for it was a strange coincidence. As for Mr. Bennett——”

“Well?”

“I was not looking at his pin, but at his face. He is so like—so strangely like—the *other*.”

I could not think of anything to say, for at critical moments my vocabulary always proves inadequate, so I merely took her hand and stroked it gently.

“I don’t know why I have told you this,” she said, “but you have all been so good to us that we are no longer strangers, nor even mere acquaintances; and my heart is still so heavy sometimes. We all have graves in our hearts, we women. Yours has not come yet, and I hope it may be long deferred; mine is still green enough to be painful when I visit it. Forgive me, dear; you look quite sad, and, indeed, I am not worthy of so much sympathy.”



"You are very brave," I said admiringly.

"I do not show the white feather to the world, that is all. But tell me about Mr. Blake, whom I met here the other day. Who and what is he?"

I could tell her very little, for Mr. Bennett had proved uncommunicative about his friend, and beyond the fact that he would be here for an indefinite period I knew nothing.

"But do tell me," I remarked, as she rose to go, "has Mrs. Bundy heard anything about her jewels?"

"Not yet. Poor old soul, she is quite heart-broken. It is generally believed a detective is in the hotel, posing as a guest, but he does not seem to be making any progress. I feel perfectly comfortable about my few possessions, however, thanks to your goodness."

She went away then, and I sat alone in the hammock, thinking of the two secrets I had learned that afternoon, and watching the glow of the setting sun, which turned some sails pink and others pearly white, as the boatloads of merrymakers sailed home.


After a while Gabrielle and Elizabeth appeared, rather the worse for wear, and inclined to be indignant. They had not enjoyed themselves; the shops were no good whatever, Lady Edith had been unable to go, and there had been some misunderstanding, for Lord Wilfrid had not met them at the time appointed.

Altogether, the day had been a failure, and it was not until a good dinner had calmed their aggrieved spirits that I began to relate my own experiences, giving the history of Mary Anne with as much pathos as I could manage.

"Of course," remarked Elizabeth, "we ought to discharge her. It is not pleasant to think of a murderer being concealed in the house."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Gabrielle, in an alarmed voice. "What are you talking about? Think of her waffles."

"Oh, I was not going to do it; I only said that we *ought* to. She is too valuable to lose, especially if he really is going away."



So we told Mary Anne that it was all right, and we would allow her son to escape as he had planned. She was pathetically grateful, and promised never to allow him on the premises again, so we felt quite comfortable about him; and, after all, why should we interfere with a fellow-creature in his effort to preserve life, since the life he took could not be restored by his capture?

But my last thought that night was of Lady Edith and the look in her brown eyes as she held the little key.

CHAPTER IX

“My love is like a red, red rose
That’s newly blown in June;
My love is like a melody
That’s sweetly played in tune.”

It was a baritone voice, so clear, so strong, and yet so sweet that involuntarily we stopped talking and listened until the end of the verse.


“Where is it?” I questioned.

“I think,” said Gordon Bennett, “it must come from a boat; it will round the point presently.”

We were walking along the beach, and had wandered farther than we intended, almost to the point of the island, in fact, and, quite tired out, I had seated myself upon a rock to rest a while before going back.

“I wish he would sing again,” I remarked; “don’t you?”

“Well, no,” returned my companion; “to be frank, I would rather have your undivided attention.”



“Why, please?”

“I suppose it is because I was born with a selfish disposition.”

“Listen!” I exclaimed, as the song began again, closer this time, with every word distinct and clear.

“So fair is she, my dearest dear,
So much in love am I,
That I would love her all my life
Till all the seas run dry;
Till all the seas run dry, my dear,
And rocks melt wi’ the sun——”

The boat was quite near now, and the song ceased abruptly as the singer stood erect and waved his hat cheerfully; a white parasol in the stern also beckoned invitingly.

“Why,” I said, “they are waving at us.”

“It is Graham,” said Gordon Bennett briefly, “and your friend Lady Edith.”

“So it is.” I was genuinely pleased, for I could see they wanted us to join them, and I was more than willing to avoid the walk home.

“Get aboard,” called Mr. Graham, as the bow grated against a rock. “You can do it, if

you don't mind stepping from one rock to the other."

"We can do it easily," I replied, "if Mr. Bennett will give me his hand to steady me."

"Would you not rather walk home?"


Mr. Bennett's voice was certainly not encouraging, but I ignored it, for I wanted the sail.

"Come, Mr. Bennett," called Lady Edith; "we have plenty of room. I have been spending the morning with Mrs. Graham, and we went out for a sail just after lunch, but she could not be persuaded to join us."

"Oh!" I said, as I took Mr. Graham's outstretched hand and stepped into the boat, which wobbled unpleasantly. "It is awfully nice—after you get in."

"It is a bully day for a sail," he returned, his face glowing with the pleasure it had given him. "I only wish you would talk a bit to Mrs. Graham and get her to come out just once. She has no idea how fine it is.

"My wife," he explained to Mr. Bennett, who had followed me into the boat, "has an



unaccountable aversion to the water; and she will not trust herself on it, even with me."

"Indeed!" remarked Mr. Bennett dryly. "She must condemn herself to a good many hours alone, for I notice you are out constantly."

"Oh, yes; we agreed that I was to go whenever I chose. She does not wish to keep me at home, and we quite understand each other on the subject."

"You were singing," I said, as the sail filled and the boat cut through the water; "won't you please go on. I had no idea you had such a lovely voice."

"Yes," said Lady Edith; "do sing again, Mr. Graham. It was quite lovely, and you must not be selfish with such a talent."

So Mr. Graham sang again, and we listened entranced, for his voice was very melodious, and he sang as the birds do, with no apparent effort or consciousness of his charm. Lady Edith in the stern kept her face in the shadow of her parasol and said but little, yet I saw her eyes grow misty, and remembered our


conversation about the little gold key. Was she thinking of the man she loved? I wondered dreamily.

"I'll land you at your own dock," he remarked, as he steered for the shore. "And I'm sure I am very grateful for the nice things you say about the songs. I sing because I like to sing—just as I yield to every impulse whenever I can get any pleasure out of it. It seems the simplest thing to do."

It was rather a dangerous theory, I thought, although as I looked at Mr. Graham's ruddy face and heard his careless laugh I quite understood that he would generally live up to what he said. And I had a quick recollection, too, of the package Elizabeth had opened; was that caused by a sudden impulse, I wondered, and had he extracted his full measure of satisfaction out of it?

Lord Wilfrid was waiting on the dock when we landed, his cap pulled down over his eyes and his manner the reverse of cordial.

"I have looked everywhere for you, Edith," he said. "You did not tell me you expected



to go sailing. Did you make up your party this morning?"

He looked at Gordon Bennett as he spoke, and paused for a reply.

"It was quite unpremeditated," said that gentleman. "In fact, your sister and Mr. Graham were kind enough to pick us up a good bit down the beach and give us a lift home."

"Was any one else with you?"

"I took a short sail with Mr. Graham, Wilfrid," said Lady Edith. "I am sorry if you have needed me, but I thought you intended fishing this afternoon."

She looked steadily at him, and he lowered his eyes instinctively. But his face, as he watched Mr. Graham push off and sail away, was heavy and lowering, and his fingers twitched nervously.

"Listen," I said. "Mr. Graham is singing again."

He was standing by his sail now, the light of the sun full upon him, apparently unconscious of the picture he made.

“And I will love you still, my dear,
When all the seas run dry——”

The words of the old song died away, and I turned to my companions.

“Let us go home” I said; but Lady Edith and her brother had already gone.

CHAPTER X

IF there are any who, like Mrs. Graham, dislike salt air and object to the constant intrusion of the ocean, this narrative will not interest them.

Looking back upon it now, it seems to me that everything we did that summer, indeed almost everything we thought and said, was in some way connected with the sea. And perhaps this is not so strange after all, since we looked out upon it from every window and its murmur was never absent from our ears.

It was Gabrielle who originated the plan of a supper on the rocks. Gabrielle was great in originating, but we used to tell her she liked to watch other people carry out her ideas. She sat in the hammock and urged her project, while her hair blew about her ears and her book slipped unnoticed from her lap.

"We will ask the Campbells to join us," she said, "and Mr. Bennett and Mr. Blake of course."

"And the Grahams," I added.

"If you like," the tone was not enthusiastic; "I must say she gets on my nerves, she is so mysterious."

Gabrielle dislikes secrets unless she happens to be a party to them. She now returned to the subject with renewed vigor.

"It is full moon, you know. Think of the water dashing over the rocks, and the fire we'll make out of driftwood."

"Spoons, forks, and napkins for all those people," ruminated Elizabeth, "to say nothing of things to eat. It will be a lot of trouble."

"No trouble at all. Just get Mary Anne to put some things in baskets. In fact," Gabrielle paused a moment before breaking the news, "I have already asked Mr. Bennett; I met him in the village when I went for the mail, and it suddenly occurred to me it would be nice to do this to-night."

Of course after this startling disclosure it was impossible to demur further, and Elizabeth rose to the occasion.

“It is all very well for you to laugh,” she remarked, “but you don’t even know whether there is as much as a cracker in the house. I’ll have to go to the village and see what I can find.”

I really sympathized with Elizabeth and tried to show it in a practical manner.

“Suppose I do the marketing. I love poking round in those queer little shops.”

“You’d buy whatever they told you,” she returned, ungratefully, “and probably come home with a leg of mutton and a head of cabbage for a picnic supper. No—I’ll send Mary Anne; that will be best of all.”

Mary Anne, as usual, came nobly to the rescue.

“It’s not the first supper I’ve spread on the rocks,” she said, “and most likely it won’t be the last. So rest easy, Miss Elizabeth, fur well I know how to purvide and there’s nothin’ to werrit yerself over at all. Though why folks should want to do sich things when they might set up at a table and eat like Christians, I can’t fur the life of me make out.”

Gabrielle repeated this speech as we sat around our fire that night and watched the waves break against the rocks, sending up little fountains of foam that sparkled in the moonlight. Her hands were clasped about her knees, and her hair glistened here and there where the spray had touched it.

"Of course," said Lord Wilfrid, "one could not expect the lower classes to understand the subtle fascination of an evening like this."

"Wilfrid knows so little of the lower classes," interposed Lady Edith; "would n't it be better, dear, to give them the benefit of a doubt? They *may* enjoy the beauties of nature in their way, you know, although it is of course quite different from yours."

It was a very innocent little speech, laughingly uttered, yet Lord Wilfrid's face darkened disagreeably and he pulled his cap down over his eyes in a manner distinctly irritable. Evidently he brooked no criticism, however slight, and I wondered whether this was the effect of his illness or his natural disposition. His sister looked at him a moment, then

turned to Elizabeth with a perfunctory remark about the beauty of the night. She never noticed his sulky moods, although they occurred quite often, and was always ready to respond with a smile or a cheerful word when he deigned to be pleasant again.

Elizabeth laid her hand on Lady Edith's with a caressing gesture. She said afterward that she was glad she had done it, for at the moment she quite hated Lord Wilfrid and knew from the way his sister's hand clasped hers that she needed sympathy.

They sat together upon a large flat rock with their backs against a higher boulder, while Mr. Blake and Mr. Graham sat at their feet, feeding the fire with bits of driftwood and casting appreciative glances at the picture just above them.

I thought Mr. Blake looked as though he envied Elizabeth and would have been quite willing to be sympathetic himself. I could not see Mr. Graham so distinctly, for his face was in the shadow, so I leaned forward a little that I might get a better view. As I did

so I noticed that Mrs. Graham also was looking toward him and beyond him to the sea, her dark eyes widely opened and her lips slightly parted.


The fresh salt air had brought no touch of color to her face, which seemed even paler than usual in the white light as I followed the direction of her gaze, past the blazing fire, over the rocks, and out where the ocean stretched undulating into space. A broad silver path was spread directly opposite us, quivering with the incoming tide and sparkling here and there where the billows broke into little white-capped waves.

"It is lovely, is n't it?" I said, thinking I understood her abstraction.

She turned toward me with a quick nervous movement.

"I beg your pardon, I'm afraid my thoughts were wandering."

I repeated my remark with the inane feeling such repetitions cause, and she replied with a repressed vehemence which the subject scarcely seemed to warrant.



“Lovely? Oh, no—not to me. Look beyond the little path of light to the interminable darkness, and think what lies beneath.”

“Don’t think,” interposed Mr. Graham, with his light laugh, “and don’t look too far. There is where Mrs. Graham and I differ. She is always looking *into* and *beyond*—though she’s awfully afraid of what she may discover. As for me, I prefer not to go below the surface; I’d much rather float on those jolly little waves, for instance, than dive beneath them.”

“And I,” said Elizabeth, “would rather sit here and watch them than do either.”

“I’m afraid you are not ambitious, Miss Elizabeth,” said Mr. Bennett; “one must dive a bit if one considers the future.”

“Who cares for the future?” interrupted Mr. Graham, “it is the present we live in, isn’t it? The past is gone and not worth worrying about; the future will look out for itself; but the *present*—where we live and breathe, love and hate! Ah, that’s the time for me and I think I make the most of it. No

one can accuse me of crying over spilt milk, or taking undue thought for the morrow, eh, Juliet?"

"No," she returned; "no, Harry."

She spoke dully and immediately lapsed into silence in a manner that provoked me. Mr. Graham frequently made such little jocular appeals to his wife, and always endeavored to include her in any merriment, or general conversation that interested him. I thought she should respond, sometimes at least, and could understand what Gabrielle meant when she said she often had to resist an inclination suddenly to shake Mrs. Graham and see if she would then be roused from her usual apathetic indifference.

We continued to talk for a while in a desultory way, but as the moments passed we lapsed into silence and watched the water dash noisily over the rocks, for the surf was wonderfully fine that night. So we sat around our fire looking out upon the restless moonlit ocean and listening to the roar of the breakers as wave followed wave in quick succession,

each thinking our own thoughts and no doubt carried by them beyond the distant horizon of our most cherished hopes and ambitions.

Of course I cannot answer for the others but I know that I was at first oppressed by a sense of my own insignificance and then blissfully happy, content with the present moment and oblivious to the flight of time.

As I sat dreaming dreams so vague that they had no individuality but merged one into the other like mist into clouds, a little boat glided silently into the silver path. It came out of the darkness into the light with spread sails that glistened pearly white, and as it floated on the sparkling water it seemed to me a phantom ship upon an enchanted ocean. I watched it entranced, wishing I knew its destination and whence it came.

"It is your ship," said Gordon Bennett, "coming home to you."

I do not believe I was surprised when he spoke for it was not the first time he had responded to my unuttered thought. He sat upon a lower boulder at my right, his cap in

his hand, his hair powdered by occasional showers of spray from an especially large breaker, while Mrs. Graham at my left was wrapped in a shawl and hovering over the fire. His voice was scarcely more than a whisper as he continued.

“It is bringing you many treasures. Pearls beyond price——”

“Pearls mean tears,” I interrupted.

“Not these pearls; they are gems of real joy, spotless in their purity and of great value. There are other jewels, too—rubies, emeralds, diamonds—and sapphires like your eyes.”

“But I want my ship to bring me more than jewels.”

“There are other things. Perfumes and spices from Araby the Blest, gold straight from the mines without alloy; and perhaps, Miss Elise, it may bring you the elixir of eternal youth. Would you like that?”

I had a quick vision of Gabrielle and Elizabeth wrinkled and palsied by age, while I was still quite young and kittenish.

"No," I said, "I do not want eternal youth."

"But I want it for you. I should like to think you would always look as you do to-night."

"Where has it been?" I chose to ignore the implied compliment.

"The ship? To the Land of Dreams, of course; and deep down in the hold beneath the jewels, I think it is bringing you——"

"What?"

"Ah, that is not for me to tell you. You must discover it yourself."

"Suppose," I remarked, "it happens to be *your* ship, not mine. What then?"

"It is n't my ship, Miss Elise. Mine is somewhere on the black water, but it has not reached the light as yet. I sent it out long ago, and sometimes I have thought it was lost."

"Wrecked?"

"So I feared. But just lately I have begun to believe it will come safely home. Sometimes I have even dreamed I could see it coming into port and bringing me——"

“What?”

“My heart’s desire.”

I wanted very much to ask him what it was but something prevented. So I looked out over the rippling silver path and wished my ship was really coming home laden with treasures from the Land of Dreams.

I wondered too what I might discover hidden in the hold and whether I would be able to find it without assistance. The little boat, however, merely sailed on and I saw that it was going steadily away from me, taking with it my unknown treasures.

Gabrielle also had been watching it and presently voiced her theories.

“There goes the smuggler,” she announced, as one having authority in such matters.

“He is taking Mrs. Bundy’s emeralds,” supplemented Elizabeth, “we ought to hope he will be wrecked.”

“Do you wish it?”

“Why, no,” Elizabeth hesitated; “no, Mr. Blake, I’m afraid I don’t.”

“Nor I,” said Gabrielle; “somehow I can’t

help taking an interest in him. Every time I hear of a new lot of things being smuggled in I feel quite a thrill of relief. But I can't forgive the emeralds; he might have let the poor old woman alone."

"I suppose he could not resist them," said Lady Edith. "I have read somewhere that there is an irresistible impulse——"

"Could you understand such an impulse?" inquired Mr. Blake.

She considered a moment before replying.

"No, I cannot understand it. I do not wish to be intolerant, but some things are inconceivable."

"Try," he insisted; "put yourself in his place and remember the temptation. Human nature is weak, you know."

Lady Edith rested her chin on her hand and thought a while. Mr. Blake and Mr. Graham gazed at the lovely face grown suddenly serious as she pondered the question, and I knew that Gordon Bennett forgot my very existence as he leaned forward awaiting her reply.

"It is hard for me to realize," she said slowly, "never having been tempted."

"How can any one know what he would do until the time comes?" interrupted Mr. Graham, "as to yielding to an impulse—well, why are we given impulses if not to obey them?"

"Is n't that rather a dangerous theory?"

Lady Edith laughed as she spoke, but there was a note of anxiety in her voice, and she glanced involuntarily at her brother, who still maintained his sulky silence.

"A very dangerous theory," remarked Mr. Bennett; "but to return to our discussion. Smuggling is a hazardous business, Lady Edith, and it requires some courage, too, for one practically takes his life in his hands, especially stormy nights when the sea runs high."

"Yes," ejaculated Mrs. Graham; "yes!"

"Oh, I don't know," said her husband, "it has its compensations. One lives, you know—*lives*. Think of a night, out there, with the waves mountains high—a stiff wind, and raining perhaps. Black sky, black water, black

everything, and the uncertainty about landing your cargo safely. Then the sail back again triumphant and exulting—you and the elements alone together. Can't you taste the salt spray? Can't you feel the boat cut through the water? Can't you——”

“Harry!”

He paused abruptly and turned to his wife.

“I beg your pardon, Juliet,” he said very gently, “I quite forgot your aversion to the water or I would n't have let myself go.”

As Elizabeth often insisted, there *were* nice things about Mr. Graham after all. His patience with his wife's vagaries were certainly most commendable, yet I found myself reaching out after her hand as though I understood and sympathized with her strange attitude—which I certainly did not.

Meanwhile the little boat sailed on, and whether it carried a smuggler with his ill-gotten spoils or my treasures from the Land of Dreams we never knew, for it slipped away into the darkness as quietly as it had emerged. I felt as though I had lost something very

valuable as I looked out over the empty water and the ensuing silence brought me no vaguely blissful dreams, but rather a sense of uneasiness and impending danger.

Our fire had burned itself away into a bed of embers, where charred bits of wood occasionally sent forth feeble flames as the night wind brought them renewed life. The moon climbed high in the heavens as we sat listening to the waves wash over the rocks, while the embers glowed and paled and glowed again in indignant protest against their relegation to the ashes of the past.


Presently Lady Edith turned to Graham.

"Sing," she said.

And Harry Graham obeyed without self-conscious demur. Looking up at the rock where she sat with Elizabeth, he smiled and removed his cap.

"If it will give you pleasure," he said, quite simply.

She made a gesture of assent and after a moment's silence he began to sing, softly at first then his voice gradually attained its full



compass. I have never heard a voice just like Harry Graham's—so strong and yet so sweet. It had a wonderful depth of tenderness about it, too, and we listened entranced, unwilling to lose a note or a word of his song which was quite unfamiliar to me at least.

Out of the purple distance,
Over the surging sea,
Borne on the winds of heaven
Cometh a Voice to me;
See how the white gull resteth
Low o'er the tossing spray,
Pausing awhile to listen
Before it is up and away!

O'er the trackless waste of waters
Where nameless thousands sleep,
From the realm of endless silence,
Cometh the Voice of the Deep;
Hark, to the whispering water
Bringing a message to me,
*"Child of the restless ocean,
Thy destiny waits for thee."*

Where the far-away dim horizon
Touches the mist-bound sea,
There lieth an Unknown Kingdom
With its gates ajar for me;
And so, like the gull, I'm resting
At peace o'er the tossing foam,
Just waiting, listening, longing,
For the Voice to call me home.

“Don’t! Oh, Harry, *don’t*.”

Mrs. Graham had risen and was gazing at her husband with widely dilated eyes and arms extended. It was a cry of irrepressible suffering, apparently wrung from her against her will.

I reached her first, being nearest, and as I slipped my arm through hers I found that she was trembling and very cold.

Mr. Graham had reached his wife almost as soon as I had and his voice was filled with genuine solicitude.


“Why, you’re cold,” he continued, “awfully cold, your lips are quite blue and trembling. This night air has been too much for you, as you feared. I’m sorry I urged you to come, but I thought you would enjoy it.”

She clung to him, oblivious of our presence.

“Take me home. I *must* go home.”

“And so you shall.”

He spoke gently, as one calms a frightened child, and still retaining her hand turned to Elizabeth.



"I'm really very sorry but we must go home. It has been an awfully jolly evening. Mrs. Graham is a bit unstrung, she's not strong, you know; I should n't have allowed her to stay out so long in the night air. And of course I shouldn't have sung."

We murmured polite, if slightly incoherent, regrets and tried to look as though nothing surprising had happened, but I think we were all relieved when the Grahams finally departed. As we watched their retreating figures gradually grow smaller in the distance, Gabrielle voiced the question that trembled on my lips.

"Why should n't he sing?"

Nobody was ready with an appropriate reply, for it really did seem as though one endowed with so enviable a gift should be permitted to use it at will.

I shivered a little, for the embers no longer sent out any heat, and the wind from the ocean had suddenly grown damp and chill. Lady Edith also shivered and drew her cloak closely about her.

"I think we, too, must go," she said; "I am sorry the evening has ended. It has been very delightful, and I shall always remember it."

"I should suppose Mrs. Graham would remember it also," remarked Gabrielle, "but I don't believe she thought it delightful."

We were gathering up our wraps preparatory to going home as she spoke, and Mr. Blake had just taken possession of the shawl spread upon the rock where Elizabeth had been sitting when she uttered an exclamation.

"My ring! It is gone—my ruby ring."

This ring was Elizabeth's dearest possession and the pride of her heart. It was a marquise, formed of seven rubies surrounded by diamonds, and as all of the stones were unusually good it was really very valuable. We were aghast at the catastrophe and hastened to help her look for it.

"It can't be gone," exclaimed Gabrielle, turning over sticks and stones suspiciously; "it *must* be here."

"It was too loose; I should not have worn

it. It must have rolled into the water and I shall never see it again."

Elizabeth spoke in the hushed tone in which one refers to those recently removed by death.

"Don't feel that way about it," said Lord Wilfrid, roused at last; "I am quite sure we will find it. Let's see—you sat here with Edith, and Graham and Mr. Blake just below. It might have caught in the fringe of the shawl. Perhaps Mr. Blake will kindly shake it."

Mr. Blake complied without result. Useless also was the ensuing search of the rocks, although they were gone over inch by inch, the men lighting matches to examine dark crevices while we scrutinized the most improbable places and tried to peer into the rapidly rising water.

At last we gave it up and prepared to go home, each in turn assuring Elizabeth that when morning came she would surely find her ring, but nevertheless secretly convinced that it was irrevocably gone.

"I've had a good time, barring the last half

hour," said Gordon Bennett as he took my shawl; "have you?"


"I don't know what Elizabeth will ever do without her ring," was my evasive reply.

"Give her another. The jewels your ship is bringing you are far more valuable——"

"Nonsense," I interrupted. "Can't you see that she is unhappy and we are all worried?"

"Please don't worry," he said; "to-morrow morning bright and early I'll have another look at the rocks. I'm rather a good prophet and something tells me she will get it again. If I can't find it I'll get a diver and see what he can do. But I don't think we will need him, for when daylight comes it will probably be discovered exactly where she dropped it. Anyway, there is no use giving up a thing as lost until every possible means of finding it is exhausted. You won't worry, will you?"

These practical suggestions were very cheering and I turned to repeat them to Elizabeth. She was saying good-night to the



Campbells, who had decided to return to the hotel along the shore. To my surprise I heard Lady Edith also suggesting the services of a diver.

"They are quite wonderful, you know," she was saying, "and all sorts of things have been recovered from the ocean."

"Yes," added Lord Wilfrid, "we will all have another look to-morrow, and if it is not to be found by daylight I know of an expert diver. However, I'm sure when the tide goes out it will be left among the rocks."

So by degrees our guests departed and we returned to the cottage, rather depressed and inclined to consider the evening a failure.

Mary Anne met us, holding the door hospitably open and smiling expansively.

"Well," she remarked, "and did you 'ave a good time? And didn't I 'ave a good supper?"

We told her about Elizabeth's loss and she listened in silence. But her ruddy face grew serious and her jaw drooped, as we described our search among the rocks and our theory that the ring had dropped into the sea.

“Lost, is it?” she said at last; “don’t you fret, Miss Elizabeth, dear. I know them rocks inch by inch, and I’ll ’ave a look meself, so I will. Jest go to sleep and rest easy now.”

We were glad to follow this sensible advice, but I think we all were some time in getting to sleep. I found myself thinking of Mrs. Graham, rather than the lost ring, and wondering vaguely why she did not like to hear her husband sing. The puzzle was too much for me, and I was just slipping into a blissful state of unconsciousness when I thought I heard a step under my window.

After a moment’s indecision I crept across the room and looked out from behind the drawn curtain. There was nothing in sight. In the clear moonlight I could see quite as distinctly as by day, and the white stillness was wonderfully comforting. It was rather awesome, too, and while I felt the fascination of the night I was also conscious of the rather creepy sensation one experiences when the world sleeps, leaving one wakeful and alone with nature.

Out before me stretched the path leading to the village and my eyes followed it unconsciously until it turned sharply and disappeared. As I looked two shadows fell across it, seeming very black against the surrounding whiteness. One was short, fat, and shapeless; the other long, thin, and somewhat like an elongated pair of tongs—a very spectre of a shadow. They moved, merged themselves into an indiscriminate mass, separated and came together again, a black streak marking their progress around the corner.

I clung to the window frame, deriving some comfort from contact with the solid wood. A pricking sensation ran up and down my spine and I was incapable of moving or uttering a sound.

In a second I was glad I had not spoken, for the shadows again detached themselves. I heard the crunching of gravel, and a familiar figure appeared around the turn of the path. It was Mary Anne, a red shawl held over her head, and no words can express the relief and comfort I felt at seeing her ample figure pro-

saically proceeding toward the kitchen door. I was rather indignant, too, and went down to ask her what she meant by such nocturnal rambles.

I found her collapsed upon a kitchen chair, breathing heavily. Upon seeing my white-clad form close beside her she uttered a stifled scream, then immediately stole my thunder by reproaching me for prowling around the house in the dead of night and frightening people out of their wits.

In fact, she became so eloquent that instead of the dignified rebuke I had intended to administer I found myself apologizing for my presence and promising to be more considerate in the future.

"But, Mary Anne," I ventured to remark, "where have you been? I was frightened to death."

Mary Anne at once became propitiatory and sympathetic.

"Pore child," she exclaimed, "of course you was upset! It was Miss Elizabeth's ring—I got to thinkin' about the best way to find

it. So I went to my brother Dan, 'im as lives in the little 'ouse jest below the bluff (which you know is gospel truth, miss). And I begged 'im to take 'is boat and go round them rocks early, miss, and see what 'e could find. Fur I wanted to give it to 'er fust thing when she wakes——”

Mary Anne paused for breath and I felt a thrill of compunction, for, after all, she had been out on our account and solely to do us a service.


“And that was your brother with you, I suppose,” I remarked. “Does he think he can find the ring?”

She looked at me a moment without replying, then walked to the door and bolted it.

“Yes, miss,” she said; “Dan 'as 'opes. Not that they're very 'igh 'opes, fur Dan ain't much at lookin' at the bright side. But 'e'll do 'is dooty, miss, and I think Miss Elizabeth may find her ring, though of course I can't be sure—no more can Dan. Now you'd better go to bed, Miss Elise, fur you need your sleep and I need mine.”

I was very willing to follow this advice, and felt hopeful that morning would bring good news to Elizabeth, for Mary Anne's brother had inspired me with a feeling of confidence Gordon Bennett's diver had not produced. As I lay thinking dreamily of him and wondering whether he would get his boat out early and go to work a sudden recollection of his appearance overpowered me.

We were all familiar with Mary Anne's brother. He was a short, stockily built man, with very broad shoulders and short bowed legs. It seemed improbable that he could cast a shadow like a pair of tongs, but then as every one knows shadows are not to be depended upon.



CHAPTER XI

"I DON'T like suppers on the rocks, do you?"

"No, I think they're beastly."

It was the next afternoon and Gabrielle and I were sitting on the veranda. I was pretending to read, while she was frankly doing nothing.

The day had dragged heavily. My confidence in Mary Anne's brother had been misplaced, for he had not appeared in triumph with the ring and we felt rather aggrieved in consequence.

Of course we had all visited the rocks many times, separately and collectively, but had returned empty-handed and rather cross. Even the Canadian sun is hot at midday in summer, and continued ineffectual stooping among rocks and loose stones would have its effect upon the most angelic disposition. Then, too, Gordon Bennett had not appeared with his diver, nor had we heard further from

Lord Wilfrid on the subject, so our faith in mankind had suffered accordingly. I also wished something pleasant would happen and agreed with Gabrielle that the afternoon was endless.

A diversion was here created by the appearance of Mr. Graham, who carried a bunch of long-stemmed white roses that certainly were never the product of the island. Mrs. Graham had sent them with her love and apologies for her hysterical outburst of the night before, which, he was careful to explain, was solely the result of her physical condition. He hoped we had not allowed their departure to break up the party.

We told him about the lost ring and he listened with interest. I thought his expressions of regret and offers of assistance were unnecessarily effusive, but then as Gabrielle said afterward, Mr. Graham always went a little too far in everything.

After a while he took his departure, saying he did not like to leave Mrs. Graham long alone in her present nervous condition. Ga-

brielle lifted the roses and laid their heavy perfumed heads against her face.

"They are beautiful," she said; "but what shall we do with them?"

"*Do with them?*" I echoed.

"Yes, that's what I said. You know if Elizabeth even gets one sniff she'll have hay fever, and I'm sure I don't want to add that to her afflictions, poor dear."

After a little consideration we decided to transfer the roses to Lady Edith, and Gabrielle volunteered to take them to her at once.

"For they must not go into the house," she said, "and if we keep them out here any longer some enterprising germ might drift through the window and up Elizabeth's nose. Will you go with me?"

I declined, saying I was going back to the rocks to have one more look before dark.

We strolled along together to the point where our paths diverged and Gabrielle became silent and preoccupied.

"Elise," she said, speaking very solemnly, "I am going to ask you a question and I want

a truthful answer, absolutely your honest opinion, you know."

"Well?"

"Do you think I care more for Elizabeth than she does for me? Or does Elizabeth care more for me than I do for her?"

I laughed, and she continued half laughing also, yet wholly in earnest.

"Well, I really want to know."

"What do you think yourself?"

The question had often been propounded to me, and I knew that a definite answer would be merely ground for argument.

"I think you are horrid. But then," she paused reflectively "perhaps you'd better not answer after all. I would hate to think Elizabeth did not care as much for me as I do for her, yet it does n't seem to me she can. You may laugh, but of course you don't understand how we feel about it."

Our paths separated here. Gabrielle, with her arms full of roses, went on to the village while I picked my way carefully along the shore to the rocks.

It was useless to look again, as I well knew, yet I searched conscientiously for some time, then sat down to rest beside the ashes of our last night's fire. I really do not know of anything more depressing than ashes when one is rather tired and inclined to be introspective. They seem to typify so remorselessly the inevitable outcome of human desires and ambitions.

So I sat watching the glow of the sunset, and thinking of many things in a disconnected sort of way. I thought of Gabrielle and Elizabeth, and of their friendship which seemed so wonderfully satisfying; I also remembered the shadows of the previous night and my unnecessary agitation over them. Then I recalled Gabrielle's parting words with something akin to a sigh. Perhaps, as she said, I did not understand, but I thought I did and envied them heartily.

I confess to being foolishly blue as I sat on the rocks listening to the wash of the waves, for I was sure no one was speculating whether they loved me more than I did

them, and I felt very lonely in consequence. The tide was low and the ocean calm and uninteresting, so I turned my back to it, preferring to watch the sun reluctantly surrender the world to the moon, which would soon come up out of the water just as it had done last night.

Therefore I did not see two figures walking along the shore and not until I heard my name in Mr. Blake's even voice was I aware that I was no longer alone, but that he and Gordon Bennett were standing beside me, both looking rather amused.

"A penny for your thoughts," said Mr. Blake, producing it.

"Nonsense," interrupted Mr. Bennett; "they are worth more than that. What will you take for them?"

"They are not even worth a penny. I really don't believe I was thinking of anything."

"Has the ring been found?"

I replied that it had not and that we feared it must be in the ocean, after all. Here I paused significantly, for I did not like to ask

outright what had become of the promised diver, yet considered a hint permissible under the circumstances.

I thought he looked ill at ease as he somewhat formally expressed his regret for the accident. His manner was certainly very different from yesterday and I decided that the incident had begun to bore him. Mr. Blake wandered down to the water's edge, but Mr. Bennett seated himself beside me.

"The world is out of joint," he remarked; "what's the matter?"

"I'm cross," I admitted, "and awfully blue. Please don't ask me why, for I don't know myself."

He was wise enough not to pursue the subject, but began to talk upon impersonal matters, and after a while I became quite cheerful and even wondered secretly what I had found to be melancholy about, for it was certainly a very nice world after all.

It was a very beautiful world, too, as the sun sank slowly out of sight, leaving the heavens tinted with scarlet and gold, fading here

and there to amber and palest pink, and we instinctively grew silent as we watched it.


Finally Mr. Bennett touched me on the shoulder.

“Look,” he said.

I turned in the direction he indicated and saw a little skiff under full sail, heading for the open sea. The white canvas gleamed rosily pink in the sunset glow, and we could see the figure of a man silhouetted against the sky. A fresh breeze had sprung up and the boat cut through the waves, now careening to one side until the sails seemed to dip in the water, now righting itself and darting forward as though exulting in its dangerous freedom. Steadily onward it went, and as I watched it Mr. Graham’s song returned to me. Almost unconsciously I repeated a few lines:

“Where the far-away dim horizon
Touches the mist-bound sea,
There lieth an Unknown Kingdom
With its gates ajar for me.”

“Yes,” said Gordon Bennett, adding after a moment, “it is Graham, you know.”



I contradicted him at once, secure in my superior knowledge.

"Oh, no! Mr. Graham is at home. I saw him this afternoon and he said Mrs. Graham was far from well. He is with her of course."


I rose as I spoke, for it was time to go home, and Mr. Bennett rose also. He looked at me in a puzzled, incredulous sort of way and once or twice seemed about to speak, but thought better of it. As we walked toward Mr. Blake I remembered the shadows and my fright of the previous night. I began to tell him about it, but a gleam of gold caught my eye and I saw he was wearing the scarf-pin with the Sphinx's head. For some reason the sight of this pin checked the words on my lips and a feeling of distrust arose in my heart, totally unjustifiable.

Mr. Blake joined us and we walked slowly home in silence, interrupted only by occasional perfunctory remarks. I was conscious of a return of my former depression, also of an inclination to be very disagreeable indeed should any one give me the slightest provocation.

Perhaps my companions realized this, for at the turn of the path they said good-by and went on to the village, leaving me to return to the cottage alone. Far in the distance I saw a woman's figure I thought might be Gabrielle coming home along the shore, and I decided to wait for her.

So I went around to our little slip, intending to sit upon the ledge until she arrived. Much to my surprise, I found it already occupied, for Mrs. Graham sat, or rather crouched, upon the ledge muffled in a thick shawl. Her thin hands were clasped so tightly together that the veins stood out like cords and the knuckles were blue and prominent. Although it was evident from her absorption that she had not heard me approach she displayed no surprise when I sat down beside her and when I spoke she answered as though I had been there all the time.

The sun had quite set now and the sky was gray and leaden. The wind blew sharply from the east, bringing with it a penetrating chill which made me shiver in spite of myself.



“Had you not better go home?” I suggested. “Surely it is not wise for you to sit here.”

In reply she raised her hand and pointed toward the ocean.

“He is out there.”

“Mr. Graham?”

“Yes.”

Gordon Bennett had been right, and this was the way Mr. Graham looked after his invalid wife. I tried not to show the indignation I felt as I thanked her for the roses, and again suggested she would be better at home.

“Roses?” she repeated. “Oh, yes. It was Harry’s idea; he is always so thoughtful. I hope you liked them.”

“I do not consider it very thoughtful to leave you like this.”

The words sprang to my lips and I regretted them as soon as they were uttered.

“I told him to go.” She was at once on the defensive. “He would have stayed with me if I had asked him. I wanted him to go. But, oh——”

She collapsed again and shivered convulsively.

"The skiff is so little and the ocean is so big."

"He goes so often I should think you would be accustomed to it."


I fear my voice was not very sympathetic, but, as Gabrielle said, there were times when Mrs. Graham jarred one's nervous system. She was looking straight at me now with an expression of terror in her large dark eyes.

"Often," she whispered; "*often?* Ah, you don't know! Day or night when the fancy takes possession of him he has to go; he says he cannot help it. Last night—and to-night."

"Last night!" I ejaculated "You don't mean to say he left you last night?"

She immediately stiffened, resenting the implied criticism.

"There was no reason he should not. I was all right as soon as I got to bed. He was restless and wakeful and I did not need attention. It was best he should go. I was quite comfortable at home."



Quite comfortable! I could imagine the thin white face upon the pillow, with frightened eyes staring into the darkness hour after hour throughout the long night, and it was not my idea of comfort. I uttered an impulsive ejaculation of sympathy, but she checked me with some dignity and remarked that she thought she would take my advice and go home.

“I shall be all the better for a cup of tea,” she said. “Is n’t it curious how depressed one gets when one is cold and tired.”

I watched her frail figure walk languidly in the direction of her house and knew that the tea, even if she drank it, would bring her no comfort. Several times she stopped and looked behind her, and once she shaded her eyes with her hand and looked out over the expanse of water toward the far horizon. I knew she was looking for the little skiff I had seen bounding so joyously over the waves, and when she resumed her walk, her thin shoulders drooping and her head bent upon her breast, I felt the contempt for Harry


Graham which something in his personality prevented me from feeling when he was actually present.

I was very glad when Gabrielle joined me and my thoughts could be diverted into another channel. I saw at once that her afternoon had not been a success and she was anxious to tell me about it.

"Well," she began, slipping her hand through my arm, "I've had the funniest experience. I'm glad *my* brother is not recovering from an illness that left him with a crook in his temper."

It seemed she had gone to Lady Edith's sitting-room at the hotel (for the Campbells had taken a suite), and finding her alone had presented the roses and had a cozy little chat, as well as a cup of tea, which she found very cheering.

"And then," continued Gabrielle, "just as I was about to come home I heard some one go into Lady Edith's bedroom and slam the door. She got up quickly and then sat down again and I saw she looked worried. Then I



heard a smash of china and somebody swore—yes, and swore hard, too. I did n't know whether to get up or sit still and, of course, I did the wrong thing; I sat still and I ought to have gone out; I knew that later."

"Well, what happened?"

"In a minute the door between the rooms was flung open and Lord Wilfrid marched in, so angry he never saw me. And, oh, Elise, his arms were full of roses."

"*Roses!*"

"Yes, red roses. Dozens of them. They were more than he could carry and fell on the floor all round him, and whenever he saw one on the carpet he stepped on it."

"What?"

"Yes, he did, and ground it under his heel. He began to say something, too, in a blustering sort of way when Lady Edith interrupted him. She stood in front of him, very tall and straight, and looked directly at him. She said, 'Wilfrid, we are not alone.' Her head was very high in the air, and I never saw her look so lovely; I felt awfully sorry for her,

too, for I think her pride must have suffered.”

“What happened then?”

“Well, then he saw me—and I certainly wished I was not there to be seen—and muttered something. And then he dumped those glorious roses on the floor and rang the bell. I tried to talk pleasantly while we were waiting for the boy to come, but honestly the whole room seemed full of red roses, I never saw such flowers in my life, and I could n’t think of a thing to say. When the boy came Lord Wilfrid said, ‘Take that trash and throw it out,’ and he gathered them up and went off.

“Lord Wilfrid went off, too. He said something civil to me about having sailed about in the sun until he had a horrid headache and the scent of the roses was intolerable. But you know he did n’t have to smell them, for he could have stayed in his own room. He scowled at his sister as he left the room and I think she is dreadfully worried about him. She is going to get a doctor from

the city, for she does n't think this air agrees with him."

"I wonder what can be the matter with him," I speculated. "Perhaps he is threatened with brain trouble. She seems to be so careful of him, and the least things excite him."

"I could n't help wondering where so many exquisite roses came from," said Gabrielle, "for flowers are hard to get here, you know. Lady Edith said her brother had never been able to endure the odor of roses, but I noticed that the white ones we sent did not seem to excite him at all. In fact, I don't think he saw them. What sort of a time did you have?"

I told her about my afternoon as we mounted the steps leading to the cottage, and we agreed that we were very glad our own families were merely commonplace and possessed no highly wrought invalids to be watched and guarded.

The cottage was brightly lighted, and Elizabeth stood in the door to welcome us. A

metamorphosed Elizabeth, absolutely radiating happiness and arrayed in her red dress, which she only wears when she feels especially cheerful.

"Where have you been?" she exclaimed. "I thought you would never come home."

She seized our hands and dragged us into the living room.

"Look!" she cried, her third finger extended.

And there was the marquise ring, its seven rubies shining in the bright light, and its diamonds twinkling ecstatically.

"It was Mary Anne," she said, in answer to our questions. "Is n't she the dearest old thing? To think of her simply rooting round among the rocks until she found it! And she would n't take a penny of reward. I think I really hurt her feelings when I tried to insist on it. I never was so glad to get anything in my life, for you know how I valued that ring."

"When did she find it?" I inquired. "I have just come back from the rocks."



But Elizabeth was above mere details.

"It does n't matter when she found it so long as it is here," she said, "and dinner is ready. I feel hungry enough to eat the table-cloth."

So we went to dinner and were served by Mary Anne, whom we each congratulated in turn, and I insisted upon her describing the very spot where she found the ring.

"Sure, Miss Elise," she said, "it was down on them rocks where I spread yer supper last night. Between two stones it was, and like as not you walked over it time and again. Be thankful now that it's 'ere and don't werrit yerself 'ow I 'appened to pick up them particular stones."

"That's true philosophy," agreed Gabrielle, "and anyhow let's talk about something else. I want to tell Elizabeth about Lord Wilfrid and the roses."

CHAPTER XII

"Of course," said Gordon Bennett, "you know your own affairs best."

"I am glad you have come to such a sensible conclusion," I replied, leaning over the edge of the boat and trailing my hand in the water, although I knew such an act is always irritating to the one who manipulates the sail.

"And no doubt you think I'm a very fresh sort of a chap."

I preserved an ostentatious silence.

"I am answered," he said, with a vexed laugh; "found guilty on my own indictment. But I hoped you would not agree so unreservedly."

I wiped my hand on my handkerchief, spreading the latter to dry in the sun, and looking out to sea with apparent absorption in the horizon.

"One ear and one side of your face are very red. Is it sunburn or wrath?"

"The sun *is* hot," I replied, with alacrity.

“Perhaps we had better go home. Will you steer for the shore?”

“Not on your life! I’ve got you out here now, and I intend to keep you. You are powerless, mademoiselle.”

I knew I was, and raged inwardly. We had been spending the morning on the water, a not infrequent occurrence of late, and until the introduction of a certain unfortunate topic I had enjoyed myself immensely; for the day was perfection, and my companion thoroughly understood the management of his boat, as well as the art of being agreeable.

The conversation had somehow drifted to the robbery at the hotel, and I had thoughtlessly mentioned the safe in our dining-room and Lady Edith’s jewels reposing therein for protection. He had protested against our assuming such a responsibility, and urged their immediate return to their owner, which proposition I declined to consider, and the argument waxed hot, ending with an emphatic assertion on his part that we should not be allowed to leave home again without a

guardian. This had been the last straw, and I had replied with an asperity which called forth the remark at the beginning of this chapter.

"Look here," he resumed firmly. "I'm not going to back down on one word I have said, but I'm sorry if you are angry about it. I think you don't quite understand my motive."

"Let us talk of something else, Mr. Bennett."


"But listen, Miss Elise. By your own admission, you really know nothing whatever about these people."

"You forget that they are older friends than yourself, after all."

"The general *asked* me to call; otherwise I should not have ventured to intrude."

His manner was decidedly stiff, and he jerked the tiller resentfully; as we changed our course in swift response, a smothered exclamation escaped against my will, for the boat careened alarmingly.

"Don't be frightened," he said, forgetting his irritation. "I won't upset you."



“I’m not frightened.”

“And don’t quarrel with me any more. I won’t have my morning spoiled by any confounded Englishman.”

“It was a woman,” I murmured, “not a man.”

We both laughed, and by common consent let the matter drop for the time being, for I was quite willing to resume the lazy, delightful camaraderie into which we had drifted, and to banish unpleasant subjects which might interfere with it.

So we talked or were silent as the spirit moved, while the white-capped waves lapped against the boat, and the water danced in the sunlight, with cool green shadows here and there, deep and unfathomable, as shadows should be when the ocean lies beneath them.

“Do you know,” he said, at last, “that I have in my possession something belonging to you?”

“Oh,” I said, with what I flattered myself was fine indifference, “I think you must be mistaken. I have not lost anything.”

I was bareheaded, for I liked to feel the wind blow through my hair, and as it curled naturally I was comfortably certain that my personal appearance would not be endangered by so doing. I wished, however, that my hat was firmly pinned upon my head as he leaned forward and looked closely at me, his blue eyes laughing, and a dimple in his cheek very apparent. I always thought dimples so out of place on a man—perhaps because I have none myself and always wanted them.

“Why are n’t your side-combs mates?” he inquired.

“Because I like them best this way;” I tried to speak carelessly, but his laugh was so spontaneous and merry that I gave up all effort at pretense and joined in heartily.

“When are you going to give it back to me?” I asked.

“Not yet,” he said, suddenly serious. “I must return it in my own way, and—I do not think the time has come, do you?”

But I did not answer, for I felt my face grow suddenly hot, and sometimes one has

nothing to say when one most desires to speak.

"We must go home," I said slowly. "The morning has quite gone. Take me in, please."

This time he made no objection, but headed for the shore, and as we approached the little slip he turned with an evident effort and addressed me soberly.

"Miss Elise," he said, "at the risk of offending you again, I must say something more."

"Don't," I entreated; "it's not worth while—don't spoil the morning. You know you said you did not want to do that."

"Give back that box to her—Lady Edith. If you do not, you will certainly regret it. But if you *won't*, in spite of what I tell you, for heaven's sake don't mention it to any one as you did to me this morning—to the Grahams, for instance, or any one at all."

"I am not likely to say anything," I returned stiffly. "I *very* much regret having mentioned it to you. By the way," I continued, "I quite forgot something important.

At least, it is important to me, because I am curious. Where did you get your scarf-pin?"

"My scarf-pin?"

His hand involuntarily sought his throat, but he was wearing a negligée shirt and soft silk tie.

"Oh, I don't mean to-day. The Sphinx's head, you know, in dull gold. Where did it come from?"

It was a simple enough question, and one easily answered, but Gordon Bennett flushed deep red beneath his tan and brought the boat up beside the slip in silence.

"Well?"

In retaliation for his persistence in the matter of the jewels, I was determined to press the question, now that I saw he wished to avoid a reply.

"My pin? Oh, yes, I remember. I'm glad you liked it."

"I am not sure I liked it; it interests me."

"Why?"

"Oh, because it *did*. I would like to know where you got it."



“Well—I found it.”

“Where?”

Again a pause, and again the blood mounted to his face.

“Where did you find it? I would really like to know.”

“In the streets of New York.”

His eyes refused to meet mine, and I knew intuitively that he lied; also that he realized I knew it.

I said no more, but stepped out on the slip with an unpleasant tightening of the muscles of my throat and a curious sensation that everything was slipping away from me.

“Good-by,” I said dully, as I reached the steps, and he raised his cap in silence.

At the top I paused and looked back, for I thought I heard my name. He sat bare-headed in the stern of his boat, gazing after me, but made no effort to attract my attention nor to follow me ashore, so I decided I was mistaken and he had not called me. I wished he had. I wanted to go back and ask him to explain, but pride forbade, and I resumed my

walk to the house with my head as high in the air as I could get it, hoping to impress him with the dignity of my exit and general air of frosty disapproval.

Elizabeth called to me as I passed the door of her room, where she was reposing luxuriously on her couch, book in hand.

"Did you have a good time?" she inquired, with interest.

"No," I returned briefly; "horrid."

"That's too bad. And oh, *look* at your nose! How did you ever get so burned?"

Elizabeth has a straight little nose which is my envy as well as my admiration, and she is always very careful to guard it from too intimate an acquaintance with the sun, so I knew her exclamation was occasioned by genuine sympathy. Nevertheless, I refused her offers of cold cream and other first aids to the complexion rather ungratefully and went on to my room, where she promptly followed me.

"Did Mr. Bennett say anything about to-night?" she asked, as she settled herself on the foot of the bed.

“No; why should he?”

“You don’t mean to say you have forgotten?”

“Forgotten what?”

“Elise, sometimes I think you must be in love—or, rather, I *should* think so were it any other girl. Don’t you know that we give a dinner to-night? Our very first formal effort, to celebrate Lady Edith’s birthday?”

I turned, brush in hand, and stared at her. I had indeed forgotten, although our menu for the occasion had been discussed and our toilets decided upon that morning at breakfast.

“And that’s why I was concerned about your nose,” continued Elizabeth cheerfully, “and your neck, too, for that matter, for of course you must wear an evening gown, and we all want to look well. You had really better try the cold cream and other stuff.”

This time I did not refuse, for I had a mental vision of my face, as the glass reported it, rising from the delicate lace of my white frock, and the picture did not please

me. So I spent the afternoon in anointing my unfortunate countenance, and reflecting upon the frailties of man—thinking of him as a species rather than as a personality, and determining to let him severely alone in the abstract, even while meditating upon a proper course of discipline for the individual.



CHAPTER XIII

"How well Lady Edith looks in evening dress!" remarked Elizabeth, as we discussed the events of the evening after the departure of our guests.

"Mr. Blake evidently thought so," returned Gabrielle. "He had eyes for no one else. But she *was* stunning in that black gown."

"And Lord Wilfrid looked awfully distinguished," continued Elizabeth. "His quiet, reserved manner is very impressive, don't you think so? The Americans simply were not in it with the English."

"Blood will tell," said Gabrielle, who poses as being very democratic, but is at heart a thorough aristocrat.

"And Mary Anne's entrées were perfection," resumed Elizabeth, with great satisfaction. "She *is* a treasure. To think of cooking and serving that dinner all herself! What does it matter to such a genius if she has a dozen worthless sons?"

“What indeed?” I acquiesced, yawning, and proposed bed, but the others objected, saying that it was not late and they were very wide awake.

“Let’s have a prowl,” suggested Gabrielle, who loved to wander about the cottage and look at the ocean from all points of the compass the last thing before retiring, as though she expected it to vanish during the night and must make the most of her time.

“Not in thin slippers,” I protested, “and good clothes.”

“There is no grass up here,” she replied, “and we can hold up our skirts. Do come, Elizabeth, just for a little while.”

I was sorry I had not gone also as soon as they turned the corner, and, picking up my long skirt carefully, started in pursuit. I saw, however, that they were deep in one of the heart to heart conversations in which they sometimes indulge, and decided not to interrupt them, but to wait until they came back to earth and remembered my existence. So, after a moment’s hesitation, I sat down on the

steps leading to the slip, knowing they would certainly visit it before they went in, as it was Gabrielle's favorite view. Even to-night, when there was no moon and the outlook was therefore limited, I was sure she would not desert it.

Resting my chin in my hand, I reviewed the evening, which, from my own private and particular standpoint, had been a failure. Elizabeth had mentioned Lord Wilfrid's reserved manner, but to me he had seemed distinctly sulky, and I had more than once seen his sister look at him appealingly, and at last with an indignant sparkle in her brown eyes, after which he roused himself and conversed in a perfunctory manner with his neighbor—who happened to be my unfortunate self.


Now, I had fully intended to impress Gordon Bennett with the fact that he was still under the ban of my displeasure, and in the privacy of my own room had rehearsed a dignified bearing and certain imaginary speeches I thought would be very effective. It was therefore somewhat disconcerting to be

politely ignored by the gentleman in question, who, beyond a civil bow and smile, had appeared unaware of my existence and had devoted himself exclusively to Elizabeth, who looked especially pretty in her pale blue princess gown, and whose nose, being entirely guiltless of sunburn, did not shine.

The air of jollity which had distinguished our little impromptu feasts seemed to me lacking on this more formal occasion. It was as though our guests had put on another personality with their evening clothes, and I found it unfamiliar and hard to tolerate.

Lady Edith, to be sure, was a joy to behold, and talked with unusual brilliancy. Her white shoulders and golden hair were strikingly accentuated by her low-cut black gown, and the color came and went in her cheeks like the fitful spark of an opal.

Mr. Blake, the quiet, the self-contained, beside whom she was placed, let his soup grow cold as he looked at her, and had evidently forgotten the presence of any one else long before the appearance of the salad. By the



time coffee arrived I decided he was hopelessly lost, and felt a sincere sympathy for him, for in the lace of her bodice gleamed the little gold key, and I knew it locked all men but one out of her heart.

I felt very sorry for them both, in the light of my recently acquired information. There were shadows beneath her eyes, and a repressed restlessness of manner which I attributed to overtaxed nerves, for I knew she felt it incumbent upon her to make a special effort to be agreeable, since the dinner was given in her honor. Perhaps, I reflected, the anniversary brought with it painful memories of other days, and for her sake as well as my own I wished it were over.

Well, it *was* over, and our guests had been gone for an hour, though it was now but eleven o'clock. I imagined Gordon Bennett and his friend arriving at their island and discussing us over their cigars, with doubtless a cooling and stimulating beverage to refresh them after their exertions, and I would have liked to hear what they said.

Gabrielle often remarks that she never hears ice clink in a glass and smells a good cigar that she does not wish she were a man, and secretly I sympathize with her, although I always make a point of disagreeing in a slightly superior manner, as though such things were beneath contempt.

I was thinking of this now in a dreamy, half-conscious way, when I suddenly became aware that I actually smelled a cigar—and a very good one. Moreover, the odor came from beneath, and as the steps led directly to the slip the conclusion was forced upon me that some one was down there. Curiously enough, I was not frightened, but decidedly indignant. Some one was taking a great liberty with private property, I thought, and I wished I were brave enough to go down and order him—or them—away, forthwith.

There was, as I said, no moon, and I could not positively distinguish anything as I peered down into the darkness, but thought I saw a point of light like the end of a cigar, and certainly heard a subdued murmur of voices.

In another instant the slip and everything upon it stood out against the darkness with the clearness and accuracy of a picture thrown upon a screen, its every detail distinct and visible. After an incredulous moment, I understood, for I recognized the broad beam of white light which fell across the water with dazzling brilliancy. Our friend the searchlight had paid us many visits since that first night upon the slip, and we had come to regard it with an amused tolerance, and to watch for it, especially on dark nights or in bad weather. We seldom watched in vain, for it was a persistent and hard-working light and explored the island, or at least our end of it, with painstaking thoroughness and regularity.


So I sat in the sheltering darkness on the top of the steps and looked down upon the illuminated slip, while my heart thumped audibly and I wished most ardently I had never ventured out.

For there were two men upon it, and an unlighted steam launch waited beside it. One

of them knelt before the door of the boat-house, evidently trying to unlock it, while the other watched with interest, and finally produced a bunch of keys from his own pocket and selected one as he handed them to his companion, with apparent directions how to apply it. And I saw plainly that the man who supplied the keys was Gordon Bennett, who, with his friend Mr. Blake, was trying to force an entrance into our boat-house.

Another instant, and I sprang to my feet and fled incontinently, my fingers in my ears and my progress sadly hampered by the long trailing skirt over which I tripped and stumbled, and which, I will remark in passing, was irrevocably ruined.

I do not know why I ran, nor why I stopped up my ears, since I had not heard a word of any kind, and was certainly in no personal danger; but I rushed wildly on and finally cast myself breathless upon my bed, my pulses throbbing painfully and my whole being quivering with a sense of shame. For I had so nearly loved him. I knew it now, even



as I knew his unworthiness. Had he not lied to me that afternoon? Lied about so simple a matter that I should then have understood he had something to conceal—something of which to be ashamed. And now he was trying to force an entrance to the boat-house. But why? Was he a common thief?

“Oh, no,” I cried, aloud; “no, not *that!*”

Then I sat suddenly upright, for I remembered the safe in the dining-room, with the jewels locked in it—the pearls which belonged to Lady Edith’s mother—and I remembered also my indiscreet disclosures regarding it, and the questions he had asked, even while professing his disapproval—keen, searching questions as to the exact location of the safe and the form of lock upon it. And I had told him everything he wanted to know willingly.

“Oh!” I cried again. “I’m a fool, and he knew it, and used me for a tool.”

Therein lay the chief sting. He had used me as a tool, and my woman’s vanity was wounded to the quick.


Going into the next room, I leaned out of

the open window, looking toward the ocean and watching for something, I was not sure what. The searchlight was at work again, and by its light I saw a little dark boat steal away from our slip and make its way toward the point of the island. I could see two figures in its stern, so I knew the key had not been successful and our boat-house was still closed. I supposed also that the presence of the searchlight had frightened them away, and felt grateful for it.

I heard the voices of the girls, and returned to my own room, hastily removing my dress and slipping into bed. To-morrow I would tell them, but not to-night—I could not talk to-night. I could not even think.

“She’s sound asleep,” whispered Gabrielle, after an inquiring peep over the bed. “It must be later than we thought.”

“It’s awful the way we forget the flight of time when we get to talking,” returned Elizabeth remorsefully, and they lowered their light and moved softly, in order not to disturb me.



But I lay with widely opened eyes, staring into the darkness, long after their quiet breathing told me they had gone peacefully to sleep. How hot the pillow was! I turned it restlessly, hoping the other side might contain a soporific influence and I could get away from the tormenting, ever recurring question, *what did he want in there?* So far as we knew, the place was empty; why, then, should any man want to force an entrance?

Perhaps, after all, it was nothing that could not be explained. I would write him in the morning and tell him quite frankly what I had seen, and ask for an explanation. And he, of course, would answer promptly. Then I remembered the scarf-pin of the Sphinx's head, and knew that any explanation, no matter how plausible, would always be accompanied by a doubt in my own mind.

I remembered something else also—Mrs. Bundy's emeralds, and the supposition that the one who took them had departed without waiting for breakfast. Had he not by his own

showing left the hotel very early indeed the morning after the storm?

I tried to put this thought away from me, but it returned again and again with hideous pertinacity, until, after a long time, my senses became dulled and I fell into an uneasy dose, where I heard Lady Edith demanding her mother's pearls of Gordon Bennett, while he insisted he was having them set into side-combs for me, and could not, therefore, comply with her request.



CHAPTER XIV

"If you please, miss, could you come to Mrs. Graham?"

This unwelcome summons forced itself upon me as I lay luxuriously reading upon the couch in the living-room the day following our dinner party.

"Did she send for me?"

"No, miss."

Mrs. Graham's servant, a half-grown girl with a face of surprising stupidity, stood stolidly before me, the ends of a small shawl held under her chin, and a frightened expression in her small eyes.

"Then, why did you come?"

To my surprise, the girl put her face in her hands and began to cry with a sniffing persistency very annoying to hear.

"I'm scared of her," she sobbed; "she's that queer, miss. She's went all blue and stiff-like, and Mr. Graham ain't there, nor nobody but me. And, seeing as how you come

to the house sometimes, miss, I thought as maybe you might help me, fur I'm scared to stay alone, so I am."

I rose reluctantly, for I knew but little of illness, and was also "scared" of the prospect; but go I must, in common decency, and alone at that, for Mary Anne and Elizabeth were out, and Gabrielle was shut up in her room with a bad cold, the result of too much wandering about with thin slippers the night before.

A chill east wind was blowing, and I shivered as we hastened down the path and up the narrow steps.

Mrs. Graham lay rigid upon the couch, her eyes shut and her lips blue and pinched. I put my hand over her heart, and its faint flutter was a great relief, as I had thought her dead.

"It is only a faint," I exclaimed, and directed the bewildered girl to assist me in my efforts to revive her. At last we were rewarded by a long-drawn sigh, and the lids slowly lifted from the dark eyes.



The servant had found some brandy, and I held a little to her lips, motioning her not to speak, but she pushed the glass aside and sat upright.

"It is a bad dream," she said—"only a dream! Say it—*only a dream!*"

"Only a dream," I repeated soothingly—"a bad dream."

She swallowed a little of the brandy and lay back exhausted on the couch, while I followed the servant into the kitchen.

"Where is Mr. Graham?" I demanded sharply.

"I don't know, miss."

"When will he be home?"

"I don't know, miss."

"Has Mrs. Graham been ill long?"

"I don't know, miss."

"Is there anything you do know?" I inquired, my patience worn threadbare.

"No, miss; I don't know nothing."

This statement was so evidently true that I left her aimlessly poking the fire and returned to my patient.

She lay quite still, with closed eyes, so I merely drew a chair near the couch and sat down to wait further developments. I waited a long time. The minutes slipped past, and the room grew dim, for twilight was approaching—the long summer twilight which I usually loved, but whose arrival I dreaded to-day.

At last she stirred, moved restlessly once or twice, then raised her head and looked around the room.

“Where is he?” she said. “Where is he?”

“He has not come home yet, Mrs. Graham,” I replied. “No doubt he will be here soon.”

She fell back upon her pillows, and instinctively I sprang to her side, but she waved me away and turned her face to the wall.

“It was not a dream,” she moaned; “it is true, quite true.”

I heard the little servant close the window and light her lamp, and envied her the warmth and brightness of her kitchen, for the room was chilly and fast growing dark.



Finally Mrs. Graham raised herself by a great effort and beckoned to me.

“On the table in my room,” she said, speaking with difficulty, “you will find some medicine. Drop it in water—the bottle tells how—and bring it to me. But be quick!”

I ran to the little room above and brought the medicine, dropping it with shaking hand, and holding it to her lips that she might swallow it. In a few minutes her breathing grew less labored, and she even smiled faintly.

“Don’t be frightened,” she whispered. “I am better now. It is all over—I know these attacks.”

Little by little her face grew more natural, until at last she ceased to breathe with the short, painful gasp, and even sat upright among the pillows; but it was evident she was still suffering from some shock or distress of mind, for she drew me down beside her, holding my hand with a vise-like grip, as though she feared I might snatch it away from her.

“Stay with me,” she begged. “Don’t leave me. I—I cannot stay alone to-night.”

So I agreed to stay, and dispatched the maid to the cottage with a note for Gabrielle, saying simply that Mrs. Graham was alone and not well, and wanted me to spend the night with her.

Shall I ever forget that night? Her first spasmodic attempts at ordinary conversation, her long silences, always followed by wandering to the window and gazing out over the ocean with the hopeless yet expectant air of one who knows it is useless to watch, yet nevertheless continues to do so; and the final moment when, casting all reserve aside, she flung herself upon her knees beside the couch and prayed that death might come soon and spare her further suffering.

“Oh, Harry,” she mourned, “how could you? And I loved you so!”

It was infinitely pitiful, and after a while, when she grew calmer, she told me her story, speaking tenderly of the first few years of her married life and of her husband’s great love for her and for the child, and the happiness he brought her.



“Then,” she continued, “there came a change. He went away, and for weeks I did not hear from him. I thought he was dead, and nearly died also, they tell me. At last he came back to me—so loving, so patient with my invalid ways, and so self-reproachful at his own thoughtlessness. He had been yachting, he said; an invitation came at the last moment, and the letter he sent telling me of his plans must have miscarried. Could I ever forgive him?

“Well, I was only too glad to get him back, and I believed him absolutely. For a while, almost a year, we were very happy again, and I was beginning to forget, when he disappeared again. This time he stayed only two weeks, but when he returned he made no apologies. The water called him, he said, and he must go. He never told me where he went, nor what he did, but he gave up his other business, and yet we seemed to have more money than ever. He went away often and stayed for long periods after that, and for months I would not know where he was. When he came

back to me he was always kind, always thoughtful for my comfort, always ready to talk on any subject except the one nearest my heart. But he grew to hate the boy."

"His own child?" I interrupted. "How unnatural!"

"He said I loved the child better than I loved my husband," she said, "but God knows whether that is true or not. At last I became ill again, during one of his absences, and when he returned it was a question whether or not I would live. He was dreadfully shocked and grieved, and on his knees beside my bed he begged me to live for his sake. For his sake—the words sounded wonderfully sweet to my ears, and when he held my hand in both his own and whispered that he would never leave me again, I began to feel a desire to get well.

"He kept his word, too, but this summer he came to me and told me that the sea was calling him, and he must go. He suggested that I come with him up here, where he could have his boat and come home to me at night, but he would not bring the boy, and it broke



my heart to leave him. Now you know why I hate the ocean—my enemy.”

“I understand,” I said, and I thought I did realize a little how distressing it must be to her to be so near it.

“Yes,” she said; “I came here gladly, because he asked it, although I hate the air and the very sight of the ocean. But to-day I found something else. I was mending his coat, trying to keep myself occupied and not think too much, for he went out day before yesterday and I have not seen him since.”

“Yes?” I said, for she paused uncertainly.

“It is not the ocean,” she said brokenly. “That was but an excuse. It is a woman.”

She thrust her hand into the bosom of her dress, and instinctively I knew she would bring forth a small package wrapped in white tissue paper. She opened it, and I saw the blue ribbon and the little soft curl with a strange sense of familiarity. She put her finger under the lock of hair, as Elizabeth had done, and looked at me with speechless misery.

"Perhaps," I suggested, "there is some mistake."

"It is pretty, is it not?" she said. "A little, soft ring of yellow hair! Yet when I saw it and—*realized*, my heart stopped beating, and I remember nothing more until I saw you."

She was talking calmly now—too calmly, I thought, as I looked at her feverishly bright eyes. The hand which touched mine occasionally was hot and dry, and a round red spot in either cheek glowed and paled intermittently.

"I am glad I did n't know," she continued; "there are some things one cannot forgive, and I might have spoken bitterly. Now I can always remember that I never said a harsh word to him, even when I was most sorely tried. I'm glad of that—very glad."

She spoke in the tone of quiet reminiscence in which one reviews one's past attitude to the dead, after the first poignancy of grief is over.

"But he will come back," I said. "Think how many times he has left you before."



“He will not come back.”

The finality of her voice precluded a reply, and after a long silence I suggested that she lie down and try to sleep, and I would do likewise. She agreed docilely enough, and I threw myself upon the bed beside her, and in a few moments was sound asleep. I slept heavily, for I was very tired, but it seemed scarcely a moment until I heard her call me.

“Yes,” I cried, alarmed; “what is it?”

Mrs. Graham, fully dressed and with a lighted candle in her hand, stood beside the bed, a shawl around her shoulders and another over her arm.

“I am going out,” she said. “Come.”

“Going out?” I repeated, parrot-like, being still dazed with sleep.

“Going down to the edge of the water to meet *him*. It is calling me—at last the ocean calls me, and I’m going. Will you come?”

“Wait until morning; we can see nothing in the dark.”

“It is dawn,” she replied, raising the shade. “At last the night has gone.”

Off at the edge of the horizon was a broad streak of pale gray, and, while the stars still shone, they were fading fast.

"Come," she repeated, and like one hypnotized I followed down the stairs and out upon the beach, where the water lapped sullenly, for the tide was low.

We walked along in silence, and I wrapped the shawl closely around me, for I was shivering with a chill within as much as without. When we reached our boat-house she paused on the little slip and stretched out her hands toward the water.

" And another voice is calling,
Oh, it cometh from the sea,
With an undertone of danger—
But there's work for you and me."

She repeated the words almost dreamily.

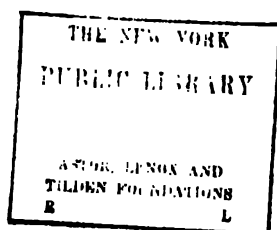
"It is the message she sent, the woman with yellow hair. I needed you, too, Harry, and I called you, but the voice from the sea was stronger, and I understand. Oh, my dear, I begin to understand!"

The stars were gone now, and a faint red





"IT IS DAY, AND HE IS COMING"



line replaced the dull gray of the horizon. A gull flew close by us with a frightened whirring of white wings, and an enterprising wave slapped sharply against the slip; for the tide was coming in now, and the ocean was rippling with little white-crested waves.

The east grew rosily pink, then glowed brightly golden as out of the water rose a scarlet ball that hung suspended a moment between heaven and earth, then smiled upon the world and flooded it with radiance.

"It is day," said Mrs. Graham, "and he is coming."

She pointed at a dark object rounding the end of the island, and as it drew nearer I recognized the government boat, with which we had now grown quite familiar. I felt a strange sense of awe and unreality as I watched it approach, almost as though it were a phantom ship and the sparkling ocean the river Styx.

Mrs. Graham spoke but once as the boat drew nearer, stopped, and lowered a rowboat, that headed for the slip.

"I am glad," she said simply, "that he never knew *I* knew; he never liked to hurt me."

There were three men in the little boat, and I recognized two of them, Gordon Bennett and his friend Mr. Blake. I do not think I was surprised to see them there, for I had succumbed to a sort of numbness of intellect wherein nothing could astonish me. So I only walked to the edge of the wharf and looked the question my lips refused to utter.

"You!" said Mr. Bennett slowly. "*You!*"

Again I looked at him interrogatively.

He was on the slip now, holding my hand in his and conveying somehow a feeling that my responsibility was over and the burden transferred to his own shoulders.

"Take her away," he whispered. "We are bringing him home. Take her away."

"Dead?"

His eyes answered, and I moistened my lips before I could articulate again.

"Drowned?" I hazarded, and he turned away, his face clouded with pain.

“Murdered,” he muttered. “Knocked on the head like a beast. A coward’s blow—from the back. We found him in the water. For God’s sake, take her away!”

Cold and shaking with fright, I went to Mrs. Graham and tried to speak, but could only put my arm about her and draw her close to me.

“Come home with me,” I managed to say, at last—“home to the cottage. We want you.”

But she only stared at me with wide, tearless eyes.

“I must go home,” she said, “to *his* home, and get ready for him. They are bringing him back to me, and he has always found me waiting. I have never disappointed him, and this time also I will be ready.”

CHAPTER XV

I do not wish to speak about the week which followed. Even now I do not like to think about it, although its long days are indelibly photographed upon my mind. I can see Mrs. Graham walking around with her stony calmness, directing everything, and receiving all efforts at sympathy with the same impenetrable air of reserve and the same proud dignity which forbade pity and discouraged intimacy.

We did what we could, which was distressingly little, and we also suffered not a few pangs of remorse at having presumed to judge her. For we realized this woman had suffered much and in silence; that she had loved deeply and been sorely wounded; and had endured the unendurable with a loyalty and patience worthy the admiration we felt and would have liked to express had she permitted us to do so.

We realized also that we had known her

only when exhausted nature had rebelled at the strain imposed upon it, when her vitality had little by little been sapped away and the long continued tension of her nerves was about to snap at this last turning of the screw. We remembered the many hours she had spent alone in the bleak little house, and thought of the things we might have done with the keen regret that comes when the opportunity is gone and it is too late.

So we were obliged to stand sorrowfully aloof and watch her prepare for her last journey with Harry Graham. We could only hope that after a while the bitterness of grief might pass away—that she might forget what she had already forgiven, and think of him only as the boy who had loved and married her. And this we hoped, knowing that God is merciful and time effaces much.

Once I found her gazing at the picture of her child.


“I am going home to him,” she said; “he needs me. There is much he must be taught—self-denial, honesty, forbearance—all of

life's lessons. He must learn them all. And he shall be a *good* man."

Only at the last, as she stood in the door closely veiled and ready for the long journey home, which she insisted upon undertaking alone, did she relax even a little. Then she drew me to her and kissed me, and I could feel warm tears upon my face.

"Some time," she said, "later on, I will write to you. And some time I will see you again. You were very, very good to me, and I thank you. Good-by."

Thus she passed out of our lives, and we settled down again, a little graver, perhaps, and a little less apt to treat every subject as a joke. Elizabeth said she did not love the ocean as much as formerly, while Gabrielle confessed she often went out of her way to avoid seeing the little house on the shore, now lonely and unoccupied. As for me, I often awoke with a start, thinking I heard Mrs. Graham calling me, and half expecting to find her standing beside my bed, waiting for me to go out with her just as dawn was breaking.



It was then that our friendship for Lady Edith ripened into love. She was so sympathetic, so gentle, and so patient with the strange attitude assumed by poor Mrs. Graham. One could not but admire a woman whose every advance was frigidly repelled, yet made no comment and expressed no surprise, but quietly did all in her power to help a sister woman through the deep waters that engulfed her.

Her charity was extended to Mr. Graham also, and, while no explanation nor excuse seemed possible regarding him, she covered his past with a mantle of silence in effect somewhat resembling the soft powdering of freshly fallen snow upon the mire of the streets.

"Let us not talk about him," she once said gently, when we were discussing the subject. "He is dead. Perhaps he was tempted beyond his strength—who knows? It is not for us to judge."

She spent much time with us at the cottage, and although the strain we all felt more or

less was apparent in the pallor of her cheeks and the black circles about her eyes, her quiet cheerfulness never failed, and she was always ready to respond to any appeal for advice or assistance. We grew to depend greatly upon her, and felt as though we had known her always.

Not so Lord Wilfrid. A card left formally at Mrs. Graham's door was the only indication he gave of any knowledge of the deplorable event which had shaken our little community to its foundations, and not even his sister could induce him to do anything more.

"Hang it all!" he said roughly, one evening when she had urged upon him the necessity of at least offering to be of any assistance in his power, "why should I mix myself up in it? The man is dead, and, from all accounts, it seems a good riddance."

"But, Wilfrid, dear, remember we knew them before we met them here. It does not seem kind——"

She paused, for he interrupted, with a disagreeable laugh:



"*We* knew them—yes, so we did. Why should I forget it? I have done all I ever mean to do for him. And don't ask me to go near that house where he lies dead—his wife looks and looks at you with her big solemn eyes, reading your very soul. There are some things even you cannot make me do, and——"

"Wilfrid!"

He stopped abruptly, and with a muttered apology left the veranda. His sister sighed a little as she turned to Gabrielle, who sat next her.

"Poor Wilfrid!" she said. "Only see how nervous he is. He always had this strange aversion to death, and he did not like Mr. Graham—men know men. I fear he is not as strong as I thought, for this sad affair has completely unnerved him. Have you not noticed how badly he looks?"

It was indeed patent that he was far from well. He was sullen and irritable, his complexion had assumed a dull, pasty hue, and his eyes were shifty and troubled.

"I believe," remarked Elizabeth that night

when we were alone, "that Lord Wilfrid takes some kind of a drug which gives him that queer greenish look."

"Poor Lady Edith!" I said. "I believe she has troubles of her own with him."

"And how bravely she hides them!" added Gabrielle thoughtfully. "Well, it only goes to prove what I have said all along: blood will tell."

But if Lord Wilfrid failed in the ordinary courtesies of humanity, Gordon Bennett did all and more than could have been expected of him, and I soon forgot his scarf-pin with the Sphinx's head, and also the fact that I had seen him trying to force an entrance into our boat-house, which extraordinary proceeding was still unexplained.

So the days passed, and we slowly resumed our ordinary routine, recovering from the shock with the elasticity of youth and health, and quite willing to put the dreadful episode away from us.

There was a ball at the hotel one night, and we all went, glad of the diversion afforded by

the lights and music, and pleasantly conscious that our gowns were all that could be desired.

Gordon Bennett and Mr. Blake, as well as many other cottagers, sailed over to participate, and as the floor was good, the music excellent, and men plentiful, we enjoyed ourselves very much indeed.

Mr. Blake danced once with me, but I noticed that his eyes continually followed Lady Edith's graceful figure, again attired in the black gown which afforded such an effective background for her golden hair and white shoulders.

"Is she not lovely?" I inquired, as my glance followed his.

"She is wonderful," he said, almost beneath his breath—"wonderful."

After supper, as I stood for a moment alone by the open door, Lady Edith touched me on the shoulder and beckoned me to join her on the veranda. Her face was very grave, and I observed that her hand was cold and shook a little as she drew me to a chair.

"Elise," she said, "I am going to pain you."

I looked at her in silence, wondering greatly, but she seemed to find it difficult to continue.

"Have you ever thought," she said at last, "that there is anything strange about Mr. Bennett?"

"Strange?" I repeated. "Strange?"

"Not quite right, I mean. What men call *straight*. Have you ever seen him do anything which seemed to require an explanation? Have you ever asked him a question he could not answer?"

I stared blankly at her, and she resumed slowly:

"You make it very hard for me, yet I must tell you. The man is not suitable for you to know; I warned you once before, but was not certain, so dared not say too much. Wilfrid says (men hear these things) that he is the man the police are after—the smuggler. And, worse still, that he is the thief who took Mrs. Bundy's emeralds."

"Are you sure?" I hardly recognized my own voice.

“Quite sure. Every one will know soon, for his arrest is a matter of but a few days. He is a dangerous character, and has been seen trying to force an entrance to your boat-house with his confederate, this man Blake.”

I uttered a smothered ejaculation.

“There is more to come,” she said, “and I do not quite know how to tell you. To-night, when you are all here at the ball, these two men intend to force an entrance to your cottage. I know this to be true—in fact, they have already gone.”

She paused abruptly and added in a tone of real solicitude:

“Have I hurt you so very much?”

“No,” I hastened to reply; “no, of course not. Why should I be hurt? He is nothing to me. But you must prove it; you might be mistaken, you know.”

My head was swimming with the sickening sensation often caused by swinging too long, and I scarcely knew what I said, but felt vaguely that I might in this way gain time, and that time was valuable.

"I will prove it," she said, catching up a wrap and handing it to me. "Would you believe me if you saw with your own eyes? Then come with me. You are quite safe—do not be afraid."

I was not afraid, but as I walked by her side through the quiet village and down the familiar little path to our cottage I wondered dimly why she had brought *me* there—why she had not selected one of the others.

"We have nothing valuable," I said, at last—"nothing. He knows that."

"You have my pearls," she returned; "but of course you have never mentioned them."


I stopped short, horror-struck. What had I not done, by my thoughtless gossiping?

"Oh, but I did!" I cried. "I *did*! I told him about the safe and what was in it."

"Ah!"

It was a short exclamation, pregnant with meaning. Then she turned quickly and took my hand in hers.

"Never mind," she whispered; "it will be all right. Don't worry."



I tried to say something, but she motioned me to be silent, for we were approaching the cottage now, and she stepped softly, as though fearing to disturb some one. At the corner of the house she paused, listened a moment, then beckoned me to come nearer and pointed toward the kitchen.

At the outer door leading into the cellar knelt two figures, men in evening clothes. I did not need the assistance of the moon, which just then emerged triumphant from behind a cloud, for I recognized them at once.

“No use,” said Mr. Blake’s even voice; “this door seems to be fastened by an iron bar inside. We must try the boat-house again. I suppose the servant is inside.”

“Yes,” replied Gordon Bennett; “I saw her a moment ago, when she passed the window. I hope we’ll have luck with the boat-house this time.”

We shrank into the corner of the house, and they passed so close we might have touched them. As they disappeared down the steps leading to the slip, my companion followed

them, still holding my hand and drawing me after her.

“Look!” she whispered.

And I again saw the two men before the boat-house, just as I had seen them once before; saw them try the door, and even set their shoulders against it with an ineffectual effort to burst it open. Lady Edith’s face appeared very white and haggard in the moonlight, and the light shawl she wore rose and fell swiftly with her quick breath.

“It holds!” she ejaculated. “The door holds!”

It seemed to be a staunch door indeed, for, in spite of repeated efforts, it stood impregnable, until at last they ceased working over it and retired to the end of the slip, talking earnestly.

“They have given it up,” she whispered, and her voice seemed to thrill exultantly. “See, they are going away. They are easily discouraged, are they not?”

It was quite true, they were going away. We saw them step into their little boat and

glide into the moonlit water toward the end of the island, which they must round in order to get home.

"You are safe for to-night," she said. "I am almost sorry I told you, for they will not return, and to-morrow they *cannot*. Let us go back to the hotel, and forget it."

I shook my head and watched the little boat, now a mere speck on the sparkling water.

"I am not going back," I said dully. "I do not care to dance. I'm going home. Mary Anne is there, and I shall not be afraid. Will you tell the girls I did not feel well, and came home?"

"Poor child!" she said. "I understand. I knew you would not go back, and arranged with Wilfrid to bring the others home. He knows all about it, but he will not speak until I see him. I will stay with you."

I would much rather have been alone, but could not be ungrateful enough to say so. I wanted to go to bed, where the darkness would cover my burning head and I could yield to the sobs which rose in my throat and

for very pride's sake must now be strangled. I had not told Gabrielle and Elizabeth about what I had seen the night of our dinner party; I had meant to do so, of course, but weakly deferred it, because the telling was painful to me, and I hoped somehow to unravel the mystery and find the explanation I longed for. Then had come Mrs. Graham's trouble, and I had seen much of Gordon Bennett; so much that, little by little, I had put my doubts away from me and trusted the man in spite of everything, because my heart wanted to trust him, and because of something I saw in his eyes when they looked at me.

Lady Edith was very gentle and very tactful when she went back into the cottage with me. She explained to Mary Anne that I had one of my bad headaches and wanted to go quietly to bed. She told her also to bring me a cup of hot tea, and when I resisted followed her into the hall, and I heard a low-voiced conversation, of which I distinguished only the concluding sentences.

"Very well," said Mary Anne, in a tone of



sullen remonstrance that surprised me; “very well, I’ll make the tea, but I’ll give it to ’er meself, so I will. I’ll have no ’and in——”

“That is quite enough,” said Lady Edith sharply. “You will make the tea and bring it here. I will come out and get it and take it to Miss Elise; she is ill, and cannot have you lumbering about her room.”

After all, it was Mary Anne who brought me the tea, pushing the bedroom door open and marching to my side with the manner of one determined to do or die. I drank it, and she went away again, without a glance at Lady Edith, who sat beside me, saying nothing indeed, but occasionally touching my forehead with fingers which were cold rather than cool and now and then trembled slightly. I knew that in spite of her admirable self control the evening had been an exhausting one for her as well as for me.

After a while we heard Gabrielle and Elizabeth come home, and she met them in the hall, telling them I had fallen asleep at last, but

had been quite prostrate with a sudden headache, and would no doubt be all right in the morning.

I heard them say good-night and come upstairs very softly in order not to disturb me. Then the lights went out, the house grew quiet, and I lay there alone with my secret—my *two* secrets, indeed, for I knew why Gordon Bennett looked at me so strangely, and knew also that he was unworthy a woman's love.

So I clinched my hands and fought my fight, and after a while the tumult in my brain ceased, for sleep is merciful and brings with it oblivion to exhausted nature.

CHAPTER XVI

“ELISE, wake up.”

Gabrielle, looking unnaturally tall in her yellow kimono with long-legged storks and large chrysanthemums straggling indiscriminately across it, stood beside my bed—the lighted candle in her hand held at an angle which caused the grease to drip upon my face and materially assist in rousing me.

“What’s the matter?” I demanded, sitting indignantly upright. “I’d only just gone to sleep.”

“Hush—don’t make a noise. There is some one in the house.”

“*What?*”

I was wide enough awake now, and the events of the preceding evening flashed across my mind with unwelcome distinctness.

“At least, we think so. I heard a noise and waked Elizabeth, and we both listened. It was in the dining-room, and oh, Elise——”

“Lady Edith’s pearls!” I finished in an

awed whisper, adding as an afterthought:
"Where is Elizabeth?"


"Gone to wake Mary Anne. Do get up and put on your wrapper; we might as well be prepared."

I have since asked Gabrielle if she thought it unconventional to receive burglars in a *robe de nuit*; at that time, however, I did not question the motive of her command, but reached obediently for my slippers, and was enveloped in my pink kimono when Elizabeth appeared in her blue one.

Elizabeth was very pale and looked as though she had encountered a regiment of ghosts, as she collapsed in a crumpled heap on the foot of my bed.

"She was n't there," she said in a frightened whisper; "her bed had not been touched, and—oh, I'm afraid!"

We all were, for that matter, and huddled close together, listening intently. Mary Anne, a tower of strength in any emergency, had failed us in our hour of need, and we felt weakly incompetent as well as alarmed.



We listened with strained attention and every sense alert, dreading the unknown, yet still more fearful of the silence which enveloped the house like a pall. We heard nothing, however, except the sound of the waves, usually soothing in its regularity, but to-night accompanied with an overpowering sense of loneliness and a realization of our helplessness and complete isolation.

But as the slow moments passed and nothing happened we grew gradually calmer, and even ventured to creep noiselessly into the hall and lean over the banisters, ready for instant flight back to my room at the first suspicion of a movement below—there to barricade the door and insure personal safety if possible. Again we listened, and again nothing happened.

“Would you be afraid to go down-stairs?” suggested Gabrielle, always the most valiant. “It seems all right.”

We *were* afraid, and said so emphatically.

“Of course,” said Elizabeth, after another period of silence, “we might have been mis-

taken about the noise. But, then, there's Mary Anne—what of her?"

Gabrielle sat flat upon the floor, mingled relief and dismay in her face.

"That's just it!" she exclaimed. "It was Mary Anne."

"What do you mean?"

"The noise—it was Mary Anne. Don't you see? She has been deceiving us about her son; he is still hanging about somewhere, and she goes out at night and meets him, so it is no wonder she was not in her room."

"Why, of course"—Elizabeth accepted the theory without question, while I maintained an uneasy silence. "I'm so relieved—but I'm sorry, too. I hate to think she has deceived us again."

Gabrielle snuffed the wick of her candle and rose to the occasion, for, as she said afterward, she felt herself more than equal to Mary Anne, although she might perhaps flunk a masked burglar.

"Now, I'll tell you our best plan," she said decidedly. "We'll go down-stairs and see if



she has left a door or window open (as, of course, she must), and then we will lock it and wait until we hear her coming, and then——”

“Well,” I inquired, as she paused irresolutely, “what then?”

“Why, then we’ll *confront* her.”

Gabrielle spoke firmly, and we felt as though the act of confronting must be in the nature of the ancient ordeal of red-hot ploughshares.

“Let us go right down,” she continued, “before she has a chance to come in. Both of you get candles and come on.”

“I don’t quite like it,” demurred Elizabeth. “Suppose she brings that man with her? He might not object to three other murders if he thought it necessary.”

I got my candle in puzzled silence. Gabrielle’s explanation was very probable, and I fervently hoped it might prove to be true, but I had a mental vision of the figures at the door of the boat-house, and my heart sank within me.

“Get your watch,” advised Gabrielle, “and

your pins and things. I've got all mine in this chamois bag, except the gold beads; they would n't go in, so I'll just carry them. I'm not afraid, but I would rather have my things with me, somehow."

I collected my small store of valuables, and we formed a procession of three and ventured down-stairs, walking softly, as though afraid to disturb some one.

With every step our confidence returned. We tried the front door and found it closed and bolted; the windows in the hall and living-room were securely fastened; the dining-room also appeared impregnable; and when we found the door to the safe tightly closed, I was beyond measure relieved, and almost ready to laugh at my suspicions.

In the kitchen we found the cellar door open, and debated whether we should lock it and thus prevent Mary Anne's return, or wait and greet her in disapproving array.

"Let us listen," suggested Gabrielle, and sat down upon the top step to carry out her suggestion.



Then occurred the accident to which I referred in the very beginning. She held her gold beads in her hand, and somehow managed to break the catch and away they went. We could hear them rolling down into the cellar step by step, and Gabrielle was at first motionless with surprise, then as usual prepared for immediate action.

"I'm going after them," she announced, literally rising to the occasion.

"Down there?" shuddered Elizabeth. "Oh, no! Wait till morning."

"I spent every cent of Cousin Lucy's check on those beads," said Gabrielle, folding her kimono about her and preparing to descend, "and I'm going to pick them up right away. Wait till morning, indeed! You might suppose they were pebbles."

We sighed apprehensively, but prepared to follow our intrepid friend, feeling that we must share whatever fate was in store for her, as well as help collect her property. So we went carefully down the steps, holding our candles well before us.

Those miserable beads had rolled to the most remote places, of course, and we got so interested in looking for them we almost forgot to be afraid.

Suddenly, however, Elizabeth gave a stifled scream, which was more of a gasp, after all, and shrank back against the wall.

"There is some one in here," she whispered. "I know it."


"*How* do you know?"

Gabrielle tried to speak boldly, but the hand which held the candle shook until a little shower of melted wax fell upon the floor.

"I was feeling—under the steps"—Elizabeth found articulation difficult—"when I touched hair—*human* hair."

We gazed at one another in abject terror, unable for the moment to speak or move; then Elizabeth, whose nerves were completely unstrung, swayed suddenly as though she were going to faint.

"I'm afraid," she gasped—"awfully afraid. It *was* hair, and—oh dear! what shall we do?"



She began to sob in a hopeless kind of way, in which I felt much inclined to join, when I heard a suppressed exclamation, followed by a scrambling sound and the simultaneous flash of two dark lanterns, as a man advanced from the back of the cellar, while another appeared from beneath the steps.

Instinctively we drew close together, and when we afterward compared notes found we had each tried to scream but could not.

"Don't be frightened," said a voice which sounded strangely familiar; "it's only us, Blake and I."

The girls stared with mingled relief and amazement, but I looked the other way, for I felt a curious sensation of personal disgrace, and as though I could not bear to meet their eyes.

"But," said Elizabeth, at last—"but——"

"It is odd, is n't it?" said Mr. Bennett, with a laugh he tried hard to make natural. "I'm—I'm most awfully sorry you happened to come down. We did not want you to know anything about it."

He paused abruptly, conscious that he was floundering badly, and turned to his companion.

"Tell them, Blake," he commanded. "This thing has got to be explained, and, after all, it's your business, not mine."

"Yes" said Gabrielle, in her most high and mighty voice; "it *does* seem to need explaining."

I admired her very much just then, for it is not every woman who can look dignified and imposing when enveloped in a kimono, with a spluttering candle in her hand, and a dearth of stiff petticoats to sustain her moral backbone.

Mr. Blake cast an anxious glance toward the recess from which he had emerged.

"One moment," he said, then disappeared into the darkness, whence we plainly heard a subdued whispering.

"Are there more of you?" demanded Gabrielle, but with rather a forlorn quaver in her voice instead of the note of stern interrogation she had intended.

"It's all right," said Gordon Bennett. "On my honor, Miss Gabrielle, it's all right."

"Your honor!"

I had not intended to speak; the words escaped before I was aware of it. He turned and looked at me steadily, and again I involuntarily averted my eyes.

"On my honor," he repeated.

"Now," said Mr. Blake, returning, "if you will kindly come up-stairs, I am ready to explain, but I fear I must cause you some pain, or at least a shock."

We went up to the living-room, Elizabeth and I very conscious of our dishabille and inclined to shrink into dark corners, Gabrielle stalking majestically on in front with disgust and disapproval written in capital letters across her back, and indignation hanging from her shoulder blades.

"Well?" she said coldly, after a moment's silence.

"First," said Mr. Blake, with a note of calm authority in his voice, "I must ask you to listen to my story without interruptions,

and to accept for the time being any statements I may make. Later I shall be in a position to prove them."

"I hope so," murmured Gabrielle, plainly unimpressed.

Mr. Blake handed her a chair with the same careful courtesy which had hitherto marked his intercourse with us, and waited until she was seated before saying anything more. Gabrielle sat rigidly upright, but suddenly remembered that her feet, encased in bedroom slippers, were minus stockings, and therefore drew them quickly under the folds of her kimono, which hasty act was rather refreshing, since it proved her but mortal, after all.

"I do not suppose," he began, in the calm, level tone so irritating when one's excitement is at fever heat, "you will believe me when I say that Mrs. Bundy's emeralds are in your safe. Please don't take the trouble to deny it, for I know I am speaking the truth.

"Also, I wish to say that they were placed there by the woman you have received and entertained as Lady Edith Campbell, but who

is in reality a notorious character and badly wanted by the police."

"I don't believe it."

It was Elizabeth who spoke, and her words were freighted with sincere conviction.

"I did not expect you to. It is true, nevertheless. This woman is known as Nell Simms, and her career has been marvelous. For some years she was—well, associated with a famous criminal named James Kilroy, who gave the police a long, hard chase before his capture. He had many strings to his bow, not the least among them the smuggling of diamonds and other articles none too honestly acquired; since his arrest this woman has directed the business. She is clever—wonderfully clever."

There was sincere, if unwilling, admiration in his tone, and he paused thoughtfully before resuming his story.

"It has been my business this summer to look up this matter of smuggling, and I have followed the history of this woman as closely as I could. After the arrest of her chosen

companion she married the man you know as Lord Wilfrid Campbell, who is a well known thief and a member of the small and select band of smugglers, but who is far from being as clever as she. He is also the son of your servant, Mary Anne Brown."

Across my mind rushed the recollection of the conversation I had overheard in the cellar, and the memory of the man's voice, certain inflections of which had haunted me with their familiarity. For some reason I looked across at Gordon Bennett, only to find him watching me intently, an anxious expression in his blue eyes, where relief was mingled with sympathy. I wondered if he knew what I had been thinking, and immediately looked away again.

"The son of your servant," continued Mr. Blake's even voice, "and a dangerous character—wanted for murder in Montreal. These people, young ladies, have used you for their own purposes. This cottage you live in belongs to them, and you were put here as a buffer to avert suspicion. Your servant was

sent here to watch you and drug you when necessary; your boat-house was used to conceal their boats, and your cellar to store their goods. A passage at the back—hidden by the empty dry goods box—leads into the boat-house. With the man's mother as your servant and under their control, it was easy for them to carry on whatever operations they chose, and to baffle the secret service. But your safety, even your lives, were in danger."

He paused as though there was more to come which he hardly knew how to say, but Gabrielle interrupted him, starting from her chair and standing tall and erect before him.

"And do you expect us to believe this extraordinary story?" she inquired slowly.

"It is true."

"It is *not* true. We know there are jewels in that safe. Lady Edith put them there after the robbery at the hotel, because she was afraid of losing them. But they are pearls, not emeralds, and to-morrow I will ask her to show them to you."

"I do not wish to see them."

"I do not know, Mr. Blake, what you were doing in our cellar to-night. It seems a very strange place for a guest, but no doubt you can offer some satisfactory explanation of your intentions. We are waiting for it; your unwarrantable attack upon *our friends* hardly seems sufficient reason for your presence here at this hour."

Mr. Blake looked at his watch, then replied very calmly.

"Your friends," he said, with a slight emphasis, "will return here to-night. We are waiting for them. We are sorry, as Mr. Bennett has already said, that you discovered us, for we meant to conduct the thing quietly."

"It is impossible," said Gabrielle. "I—we—why, I know you must be mistaken."

"You can see for yourself," he returned. "I must ask you to allow me to put out the lights."

"I will not do it."

"But, Miss Gabrielle, you really must," interrupted Gordon Bennett quickly. "So much depends upon it! If we are wrong, we

will apologize in sackcloth and ashes. Tell her it is the only thing to do, Miss Elizabeth."

We finally agreed, and hid behind the portière at the dining-room door, feeling wretchedly guilty ourselves, as well as disloyal to our absent friends.

I do not know how long we stood there in the dark, but it seemed an age, as I distinctly felt the thumping of my heart and listened with strained attention for a sound from the surrounding darkness.

At last it came. A stealthy step, a subdued rustle of skirts, a whispered word of caution, and we were aware that some one had entered the dining-room and stood so near the sheltering portière that it moved slightly. We could hear a low voice command some one to go to the foot of the stairs and listen for movements above. Then silence again, and a whisper from Mary Anne that everything was quiet.

A faint light appeared through the opening of the portière, and, parting it still further, we saw two figures: one, a man, on his knees

at the door of the safe, while the other, a woman, held the lantern. Her back was toward us, but we knew only one person with that wealth of golden hair, slim, graceful figure, and those dazzling white shoulders enhanced by the low-cut black gown. Elizabeth's fingers closed tightly on my arm, and I knew she too had recognized Lady Edith Campbell.

The man bungled at the lock, and she spoke sharply to him, her voice hard and stinging. He muttered something, but she did not answer, for the door of the safe swung open, disclosing the box she had placed there in its wrappings of soft white paper. Eagerly she bent to get it, but as she took it in her hands a whistle blew shrilly, hasty steps approached, and the room suddenly seemed full of people and lights.

The man sprang to his feet with an oath, but his arms were seized by two men in uniform, who in terms more forceful than polite admonished him to keep quiet and make no trouble.

And the woman—Lady Edith? She stood erect, with head flung back and blazing eyes. A scarlet spot flamed in her cheeks, glowing brilliantly at first, then fading to marble whiteness as she looked at the array against her. For a moment she said nothing; then, turning to Mr. Blake, she spoke in an even, mechanical voice.

“I congratulate you upon the success of your *coup*.”

He came nearer and held out his hand authoritatively.

“I will relieve you of that box,” he said.

“I will not give it to you.”

“I should regret to use force with a woman.”

But we could bear no more, and with one accord pushed aside the curtain and entered the room.

“It is n’t true!” cried Elizabeth, rushing to her side. “Say it is n’t true, and we will believe you.”

“Even now, in the face of everything, would you believe me?”

"Yes," I said; "we would indeed. It is your word against theirs—why should we not believe you? Only say it is not true. The box is yours, but why did you get it this way? You had only to tell us you wanted it."

"You hear?" she said, standing tall and erect, her eyes on a level with Mr. Blake's as she looked at him, ignoring his outstretched hand. "My word against yours, and they believe me—*me!*"

"I should regret to use force," he repeated. "The box, if you please."

"Stop!" said Gabrielle quickly. "Lady Edith, may I take the box? Thank you. Surely it is a simple matter for you to satisfy this man. Let us open it and prove him wrong once for all, and then neither you nor I need ever see him again."

She unwrapped the first layer of paper, then paused uncertainly.

"Tell me they are *yours*," she said in a queer, choked voice—"your mother's pearls—and I will believe you. Only look at me and tell me so."

The great brown eyes looked into Gabrielle's clear hazel ones steadily for a minute perhaps, then faltered; the long lashes drooped upon her cheek, and she turned aside, speechless—self-confessed a thief.

Gabrielle, with a sigh which was almost a sob, handed the box to Mr. Blake. He bowed gravely, removed the cover, and Mrs. Bundy's famous emeralds glittered in their bed of jeweler's cotton. As long as I live I shall hate emeralds, for they can but recall that most painful scene, bringing vividly before me the averted face, and bent golden head, of our once loved friend.

"Surely," said Gordon Bennett, "there is no use in prolonging this scene."

"None whatever," agreed Mr. Blake, making a sign to the officers who held the man I even now think of as Lord Wilfrid.

"I arrest you," said the officer, "for the murder of Harry Graham."

Something flashed in the light, and we heard a sharp click, accompanied by a suppressed scream from Mary Anne.

“Not that!” she cried. “Oh, good Lord! not *that*! Don’t put the ’andcuffs on ’im.”

“Be quiet,” her son said. “Don’t you see the game is up?”

She did not heed him, but stood before the officers with raised hand and a certain dignity of carriage which commanded attention in spite of her gingham apron and round red face.

“Aye,” she said; “the murder of Mr. Graham. ’E done it—’e struck the blow—but why? Ask the woman beside ’im, ’er with the soft ’ands and the yellow ’air. Ask ’er why he done it. Ain’t she ’is wife? Ain’t ’e lived and breathed and worked fur ’er ever sence the evil day he fust seen ’er—the day ’e come to me and told me ’e was agoing to take up a trade and live honest and respectable? Wot did she do fur ’im? She smiled on ’im and she coaxed ’im, with ’er sweet voice and pretty ways; she said she could n’t live wi’out ’im, and more, too. And she told ’im ’ow rich she was, and ’ow easy she made ’er money—takin’ whatever she laid ’er ’ands on, and

smuggling jools and sich acrost the border to 'er friends in the States. Wot did she marry 'im fur? She did n't love him——"

The man made a sudden motion, but the officer laid a restraining hand upon his arm, and Mary Anne continued, pouring out the words in a steady stream which admitted of no interruption.

"She wanted somebody to do 'er dirty work, that's why she married 'im, and tired enough of 'im she got, fur all the gold key she gave 'im an' the cuff button which I thought I'd die when I seen it in yer 'ands, Miss Elise. Was there a stormy night she did n't send 'im out on the ocean wi' a boat-load fur the other side, carin' not a bit whether 'e ever come back or not? Did she care fur anything but 'erself?

"Don't I know 'ow fur years, ever sence she fust seen 'im, she's made that pore dead man work fur 'er? An honest man 'e was, too, at fust, with a wife and child, but wot did she care? 'E was crazy about 'er, and once I heard 'im say 'e'd foller 'er to purgatory and

wuss, and 'e left 'is wife and child whenever she called 'im, which she did wi' a lock o' 'air and some fool verse. She liked 'im, too—liked 'is fine figger and 'andsome face, and when he come around she 'ad smiles and to spare, with nothing left fur Willy but black looks and sharp words. Oh, I know!"

"Will some one stop the woman?" said Mr. Blake helplessly; but Mary Anne had more to say, and went close to her daughter-in-law, addressing her directly.

"When you sent fur 'im this summer," she said, "and 'e come as usual, you did n't like it because he brought 'is wife—pore, pale, homely little thing—so you was extra sweet to 'im nights when you met in the boat-'ouse, and he sailed you out on the sea, you two alone, and my boy here left behind, eatin' 'is 'eart out with love and jealousy. And you made a plan, you two, so's you could be together alwiz, fur you thought you could n't live apart, you said. So 'e was to leave 'is wife fur good and all and go abroad, and you was to join 'im there, fust lettin' the police in

Montreal know how they could git Willy—git 'im fur somethin' 'e done because you told 'im to. But you wanted to close up the bizness 'ere fust, you said, and git the emeralds safely landed, so's you would be sure of the money they'd bring. And Willy was n't to git a cent, fur you needed it yerself, but 'e thought 'e had 'em, fur you give 'im a box jest like it one night, and started 'im and Mr. Graham off fur the other shore. You never thought, though, when you two was talkin' in the boat-house jest before they sailed, that me and Willy was in the passageway listenin' to you. We 'eard jest 'ow Mr. Graham was to land 'im with the empty box, and sail away immediate, leavin' 'im caught hard and fast. Well you knowed 'e would never peach on you."

She paused and swallowed convulsively.

"So Willy went out in the boat alone with Mr. Graham, and with 'is 'eart black wi' rage and passion. And 'e struck the man meanin' to stun 'im, per'aps. But 'e killed 'im—'e killed 'im. And I say now, and God in 'eaven

knows I'm right, that this woman murdered 'Arry Graham, not my boy—not my boy."

"Officer," said Mr. Blake's quiet voice, "remove the prisoners."

The officers now approached the woman and held the handcuffs toward her, but she shrank away against the wall.

"Not that!" she cried, with the first note of appeal her voice had contained. "Not that! I will go quietly. Not that."

"Then go," Mr. Blake said sternly, "and remember resistance is useless. There are other men outside, and the government boat is at the slip. Go."

She turned once and looked at us, as she walked between the two officers to the front door, and paused uncertainly.

"Good-by," she said very gently. "You would have believed me, and I thank you. I—I am glad to have known you. Please forget me, and—good-by."

The train of her black gown swept the floor as she crossed the hall, but she did not look back again; we heard the door close, and steps

cross the veranda, and then Mr. Blake replaced the cover on the glittering emeralds and again wrapped them in soft white paper.

"And this," he said to Gabrielle, "explains our presence in your cellar to-night. I hope you are convinced I spoke the truth."

But Gabrielle was on the couch, her face hidden in the cushions, her dignity a thing of the past.

"Go away," she said in a smothered voice—"go away, and never, never, let me see your face again."

"What have we done?" he inquired, turning to his friend with a puzzled air.

Elizabeth now had the floor, and the mantle of dignity descended upon her.

"I think," she remarked frigidly, "we need not trouble you to stay any longer. We are quite accustomed to being alone—we *prefer* to be alone."

Gordon Bennett turned helplessly to me, but it was now my turn to be haughty and unappeased. Even under the circumstances, I could not let the others distance me.

"I do not think there is anything more to say, Mr. Bennett," I returned loftily. "I quite agree with my friends."

"It seems," he remarked, turning to Mr. Blake, "as though we might as well go home."

When they reached the door, however, he returned and stood before me, hat in hand, and a very determined aspect about the chin.

"I want to tell you," he said, "that I found the scarf-pin on the slip. It was a sleeve button dropped by the man you call Lord Wilfrid, and the clue Mr. Blake was looking for. I had promised him not to admit to any one where I got it—therefore I lied, as you know. He had it set as a pin, and wished to try the effect on the woman. You know how she gave herself away when she saw it, for you also were watching her. The gold key is the badge of this particular band of smugglers, and they all wear it in various ways. Your servant, Mary Anne, was more sinned against than sinning, and will be allowed to go free. I know you would wish this."

He paused suggestively. I made no reply.



"I think that is all," he concluded, "except to say that if I can at any time be of service to you, or if, for any reason, you want to see me, I hope you will let me know. Until then I shall be careful not to intrude."

The hall door slammed with some emphasis, and again we listened to steps crossing the veranda. Then, simultaneously and without restraint, we began to cry, while Mary Anne in the kitchen sobbed heavily.

This did us all good, and when at last we opened the windows and looked out, the ocean sparkled and glittered in the morning sun and the whole world smiled at us just as it had so often done before.

At the point of the island a small, dark object moved swiftly along; we recognized the government boat, and watched it with swimming eyes and trembling lips until it made the turn and disappeared.

Gabrielle pointed to the foam in its wake with a hand that shook slightly.

"There goes Lady Edith," she said; and we looked out over the empty ocean in silence.

CHAPTER XVII

WE were going home. Our trunks were packed and our passage engaged. We told each other we were glad to go, but if the truth were known, we were all very melancholy and wandered around picking up stray last articles in a resigned silence which grew more and more depressing as the afternoon advanced.

"It might have been clear, our last day," observed Elizabeth, flattening her nose against the window pane as she peered out into the gray drizzle which harmonized so well with our state of mind.

"It is like our first week on the island," replied Gabrielle. "Do you remember how we went out into the rain and found the cottage? It seems a thousand years ago."

"Dear little house!" said Elizabeth, almost tearfully. "I can't help loving it. After all, it *was* nice while it lasted."

We echoed her sigh; this was our last day,


and it was raining. The ocean looked gray and angry, and the wind blew so mournfully that at last Gabrielle cast herself upon the couch and refused to be comforted.

It was then I announced my intention of walking to the village, to get any mail which might have accumulated in the two days since we had visited the post-office. So I got my rain-coat and umbrella, and as I fastened my veil I heard a gloomy voice from the next room.

“What have I done with my life? When I get back to Washington I intend to make a fresh start. I will read to the blind, and—”

Smothering the first inclination to laugh which I had had for some days, I left Elizabeth to struggle with the blue devils which had got possession of her *alter ego*, and went up to the village.

I was glad I went, for, heavy though the atmosphere undoubtedly was, it seemed less depressing than our pretty little rooms, and, besides, I wanted to be alone. So I got the mail, and wandered slowly back along the




familiar path, with my heart strangely heavy and a very suspicious lump in my throat, which made me thankful I was not obliged to talk to anyone.

When I got to the steps leading down to our little slip I paused and looked wistfully toward it, but the fog was so thick I could see nothing.

"I'm going down," I remarked decidedly, as though some one had objected.

And I went down, impelled by some irresistible force. The boat-house door stood wide open now, and only the two little boats inside showed traces of its recent occupancy. I looked at them, vaguely wondering how they could seem so calm and unconcerned when so much of importance had been connected with them, and then walked to the end of the slip and sat dejectedly down upon the raised ledge, my dripping umbrella over my shoulder and my damp skirts falling abjectly about me. I am very sure that never before or since have I looked so forlorn or so utterly friendless.



I felt friendless, too, and as though nobody wanted me, and I *wanted* to be wanted, although I was not just sure by whom. So I sat, cold and miserable, on the ledge, and to this day I don't know whether the moisture on my face came from the clouds above or my own two eyes, but I am inclined to believe it was a combination, and I took solid comfort in the fact that I was exceedingly uncomfortable and would probably catch a heavy cold.

I sat with my face turned toward the ocean, so I did not see a figure follow me down the steps, cross the slip, and stand directly behind me, quite obscured by my umbrella, which I held very loosely indeed until a sudden puff of wind almost wrenched it away from me.

I clutched at the handle in an incompetent sort of way, and tried to lower it, since it was difficult to hold and I was already very wet, but the catch would not work, and I struggled vainly with it until a strong brown hand quietly closed over mine and I recognized the signet ring with the Bennett crest.

"Allow me," he remarked, just as he had

said to Gabrielle when she was fishing for the comb.

I could only stare dumbly, all at once acutely conscious of my draggled appearance. He lowered the umbrella and calmly seated himself upon the ledge beside me, raising his own as he did so.

"This," he said, adjusting it at an angle which let cold water drip down my neck, "will shield us both."

I wriggled ungratefully, and tried to assume a careless air.

"I'm not much shielded," I replied, "but, then, I did not ask to be."

"But you wanted to?"

I was not prepared to answer his question, so parried it by another.

"Where did you come from?"

"From the village. I saw you there, and followed humbly in the rear, as a culprit should. But, on my soul, I don't know what I've done, except——"

"Don't," I interrupted; "I do not wish to talk about it."

"Well, I won't. But you might admit you were just a little unreasonable that night. We really meant well."

"We are going away," I said abruptly.

"I know."

"And we're never coming back any more."

"Oh, yes, you are—next summer."

"Never any more."

"I am coming back next summer," he said positively, "but not by myself, I hope. My island is a very jolly little place, but it's a bit lonely, even when a fellow wants to rest after his winter's work."

"What is your work?" I inquired, suddenly conscious that none of us knew or had cared to ask.

"Well, I draw a bit sometimes, just enough to keep the jam-pot full, since my parents insured my bread and butter."

I sat up straight with surprise and pushed aside the umbrella.

"Not Bennett, the illustrator?" I exclaimed.

"Why not, please?"

"*Well!*" I gasped, quite overcome, for I knew and loved his illustrations in the leading magazines, and had read everything about him I could lay my hands upon. "And to think we first thought you insane, and I even doubted your honesty, while all the time you were——"

"A very spoiled, lazy fellow," he interrupted gravely, "and a lonely fellow, too, for success like mine brings many acquaintances and few friends."

"You can always have Mr. Blake," I suggested pointedly, as he paused.

"Blake is all very well in his place," he returned, shifting the umbrella to his left hand and feeling abstractedly in his pocket, "but I want something lots better, and I think I've found my heart's desire. I want you to see her picture."

"So you are going to be married?"

I scarcely recognized my own voice, it sounded so strained and mechanical.

"I truly hope so, but I have not ventured to ask her yet. Will you look at the picture and

tell me whether you think she will be kind? You see, I'm by no means certain, and it is very vital to me."

"How can I tell?" I began petulantly, then paused abruptly, for it was *our* picture he laid upon my lap, the one he had so shamelessly abstracted from Gabrielle's shopping bag. So I stared wide-eyed and speechless, with a clutching at my heart I could not understand. Was it Gabrielle or Elizabeth?

"The one in the middle," he said gently. "Elise—will she be kind?"

And then I realized he was not speaking of some remote, shadowy paragon of a girl, but of me—just as I was, in my old rain-coat and dripping hat. I realized something else, too, for when I looked up and met his eyes, I tried to speak, but could not, because my heart was too full. But words were quite unnecessary, for we were looking into each other's eyes, and of course we understood.

"And now," he remarked, some time later, when we were brought back to earth, or rather

to water, by the fine soft drizzle changing into a brisk shower—"and now you really must go in, or you will have pneumonia, and then what should I do? But first it's up to me to return that side-comb. I said I'd do it in my own way, you know, so I'm going to put it in myself."

"But not now. Think how wet and horrid my hair must be."

And then—well, I don't believe it is necessary for me to say any more. Things which are very sweet and natural, and often form cherished memories, are apt to look very different in cold hard print, and, moreover, what would become of the little shrine we erected for ourselves that rainy afternoon if I took the world into our confidence and allowed it to be desecrated by the critical outsider?



CHAPTER XVIII


MARY ANNE made us our farewell fire that night, almost putting it out with the tears she shed as she arranged the driftwood. For Mary Anne was a veritable Niobe these last days, poor soul, and every spare moment was given over to weeping. She was, she told us as she struck the match, going home to England, where she hoped she might die happy some day, if only she could learn to forget. She could live on her savings, and if not, work was always to be had when one looked for it. And she hung lovingly about us, too, with protestations of affection and regret at all that had happened.

“I looked out fur you,” she said; “I done what I could, fur I come to love you all, and ’ow could I ’elp it? I made ’em give back your ring, Miss Elizabeth, which she took offen your finger before your very h’eyes, miss, when you was ’olding of ’er ’and on the rocks in the moonlight. Oh, she was clever,

she was. But I made 'er give it up. I went out that night, but she was away wi' 'Arry Graham and I could n't git it till next day. Which it was my shadder and Willy's you seen that night, Miss Elise. He, 'alf crazy, pore lad, because jest as soon as you was out of sight she up and jined 'Arry Graham and went out on the water wi' 'im. And them red roses, Miss Gabrielle—you seen 'ow it was. And she alwiz 'ad 'em, *alwiz*. 'Arry Graham seen to that, and Willy could n't do nothing."

Here she paused for breath.

"And I never, never drugged you but the once," she continued—"in the chocolate, you know. I would n't do it for neither of 'em, and very 'ard they thought of me for it, too; but 'ow could I go for to do it and you trustin' me, even when you 'eard me and Willy talkin' in the cellar? And I brought you the tea myself that last night, Miss Elise, when she wanted to give it to you 'erself and put a powder in it to send you to sleep; but I would n't let 'er, for all she was my son's wife. Oh, Willy, Willy!"



We got rid of her after a while, and settled down for our last evening, while the fire burned with its green, blue, lavender, and red lights, wherein I now found wonderful pictures and not so very remote either, and the ocean rolled monotonously outside.

In the first long silence I told the girls about it—glad that the lamp was not lighted, and glad also that the firelight did not shine upon my face. Well, they were very, very nice, and considerate enough to ask but few searching questions—although they have since told me they were consumed with the desire to do so.

So the evening passed, and at last we went unwillingly up-stairs, careful not to mention that it was our last night in the little cottage, which, in spite of everything, we still loved.

I lay broad awake for a long time, listening to the washing of the waves and thinking the thoughts that come to a girl but once in a lifetime, when I heard a low voice from the next room, and knew the others were wakeful also.

“Were you surprised, Elizabeth?”

“Yes, I certainly was”—the emphasis in

Elizabeth's tone left no room for doubt. "Somehow, I never associated Elise with marriage—or men either, for that matter."

"Neither did I. She'll never be the same again, but oh, Elizabeth, if it had been *you*, what should I have done?"

"And I was just lying here thinking how dreadful it would have been if it had happened to *you*. So long as we have each other, nothing else matters."

"No, nothing else matters. I hope she'll be very happy, but Elise is—well, she's *Elise*, and I can't help wondering how she is going to like married life."

And I wonder, too, for, after all, it is always like starting a very small ship across a very broad ocean. But I am not afraid of the voyage, for Gordon is going with me, and we have engaged a pilot whose name is spelled with four letters; he is warranted to steer a safe course through every sort of weather, and we both believe he will bring us safe into port at last.

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